NEW

From the makers of ALL ABOUT HISTORY

HISTORY OF MONSTERS & MYTHICAL BEASTS

Nightmares, cryptids, and creatures of legend

Digital Edition

FUTURE

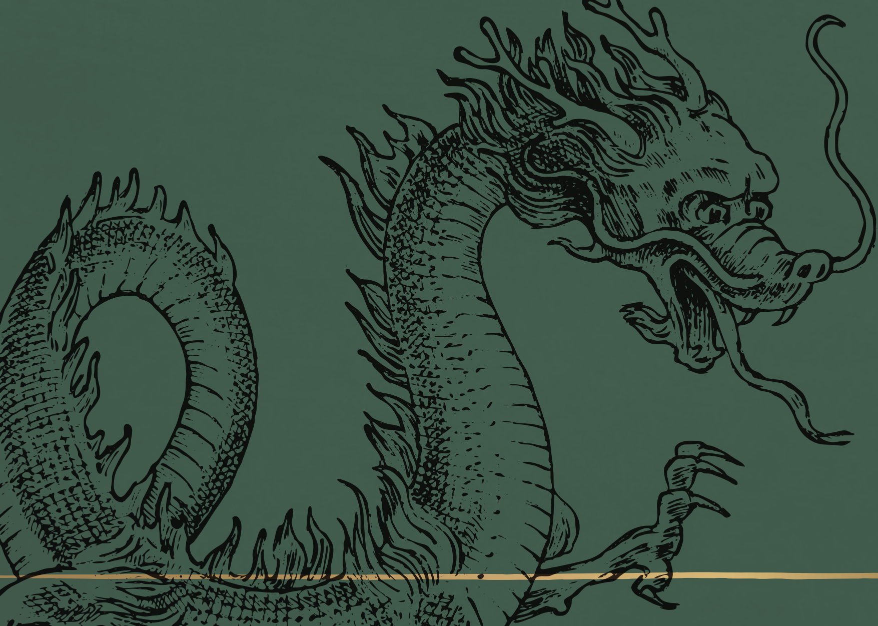
SECOND EDITION

WELCOME

Have you seen the glowing eyes peering out at you from beneath the eaves of the wood at sunset? Have you heard the sound of sneaking feet late at night when everyone else is asleep, or the slow crinkling rustle of dragon scales slithering over stone? Is that just a large cat stalking solemnly down the night-veiled street, or is it something… else?

Step, if you dare, into the realm of the monstrous and strange, and discover the beasts lurking on the peripheries of the human world. Learn about the creatures of ancient myth, that guarded temples and treasuries or roved the wilderness in search of their prey. Explore the fascinating, frightening mythical beasts of Africa, Asia and ancient Greece, and the modern monsters that still populate today's urban myths and legends. Discover what impulses drive us to create monsters to explain fears and natural phenomena, and how and why some of them wear the same shape across multiple cultures.

Don't forget to check under
your bed tonight.



FUTURE

MONSTERS & MYTHICAL BEASTS

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Folklore, Fairytales & Monsters

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MONSTERS AND MYTHICAL BEASTS

Lurking in the unknown regions of the world and the recesses of our minds, monsters have always fascinated humans

Written by Ben Gazur

In the last Ice Age the most fearsome beast in Europe was the cave lion and the largest creature was the mammoth. To the humans of this period both must have represented powers beyond their control. Yet there, 40,000 years ago, a human took a piece of mammoth tusk and carved a figure that united beast and man. The Lowenmensch ('Lion Man') is a statue with the body and limbs of a human but surmounted by the head of a lion, and is the earliest piece of figurative art yet discovered. At the birth of art humans were already considering the ideas that would later be unleashed in the search for monsters and uncanny animals.

The Lowenmensch figurine is by no means unique in ancient art. Therianthrope (animal-human hybrid) images appear in cave art from around the world. 12,000 years ago in France the image of a human with the ears and horns of a stag was etched and painted into a cave wall, four metres above the ground in an inaccessible place, as if to place such creatures far away. What did these early figures represent? Because they predate writing we will never be sure whether these were gods, spirits, monsters, or some category of being now unknown to us.

WHAT IS A MONSTER?

Monsters come in many forms - as many as the human imagination can create. For our purposes though we can say that a monster is a being who in some way transcends what is to be found in nature. A wolf is natural, a man is natural, but a werewolf partaking of both forms is monstrous. A dog having one head is commonplace but give him three and you have Cerberus, the guard dog of Hades.

The word monster probably derives from the Latin words monstrare - to demonstrate - and monare - to warn. For the Romans, the divine often spoke through the natural world. A monstrous birth, of an animal with two heads for example, would be a sign and a warning given to humans by the gods. For our ancestors, monsters and mythical beasts were far more present in their daily lives as they lived closer to the cycle of birth and death.

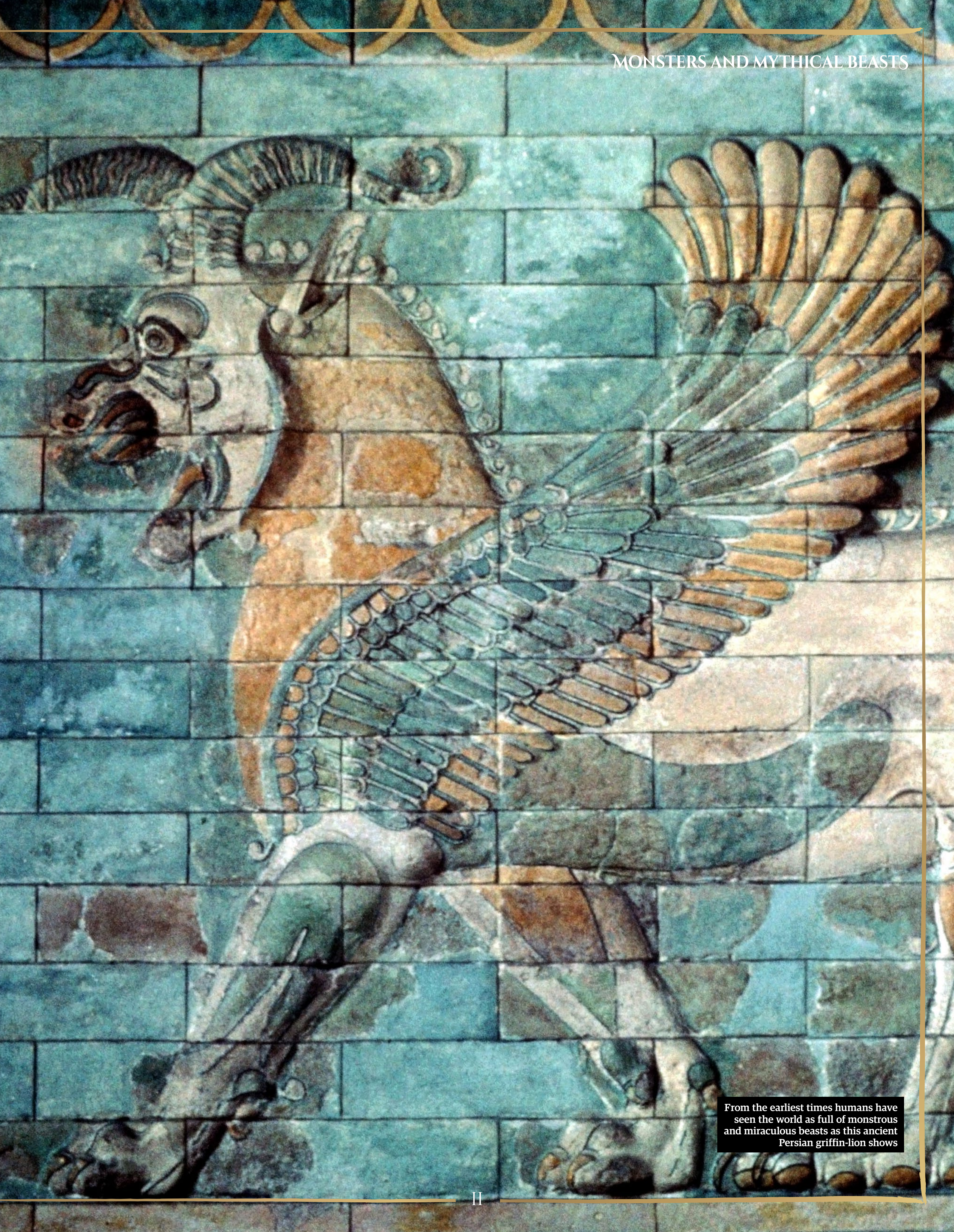
Ignorance is also a key aspect in the creation of many monsters. If you do not understand nature then anything can seem unnatural. What did the ancient Greeks make of the first giraffe they saw? The name they gave the long-necked and spotted animals was 'camelopardalis', derived from their words for camel and leopard.

Clearly the giraffe was a monstrous crossing of the two. As we shall see, the mixing of different species was one of the most fertile grounds for creating monsters.

THE UNNATURAL HISTORY OF MONSTERS

There is no way of knowing what the earliest humans thought about monsters, but as soon as writing developed monsters made an immediate appearance. Stories about Gilgamesh, first written down around 2100 BCE but orally composed earlier, were later brought together into the

> "A monster is a being who in some way transcends what is to be found in nature"



From the earliest times humans have seen the world as full of monstrous and miraculous beasts as this ancient Persian griffin-lion shows famous *Epic of Gilgamesh* and feature a number of creatures that are recognisably monstrous. In it, the fearsome goddess Ishtar threatens that unless she gets what she wants:

"I will knock down the Gates of the Netherworld,

I will smash the door posts, and leave the doors flat down, and will let the dead go up to eat the living!

And the dead will outnumber the living!"

Thus zombies have a far greater lineage than the recent glut of undead films. What was it that Ishtar wanted? She desired the Bull of Heaven, a huge and vicious beast, to attack Gilgamesh. When the hero defeats the bull his troubles with monsters are not over. He later has to face Humbaba the Terrible, a giant tasked with guarding the valuable cedar forests. Even before these tales were written down we can find traces of them in the sculptures and art of pre-literate peoples. Who knows what monsters are lurking around nameless simply because no one wrote them down?

Evidence points to Gilgamesh being a real king of Uruk but it is unlikely that he ever really fought monsters or gods. Later generations created foes of sufficient ferocity for a mighty king to fight.

HEROES AND MONSTERS

The idea of populating the past with monsters is a trope found in many cultures. The deeds of the heroes of the past become more magnificent if done in the face of supernatural enemies.

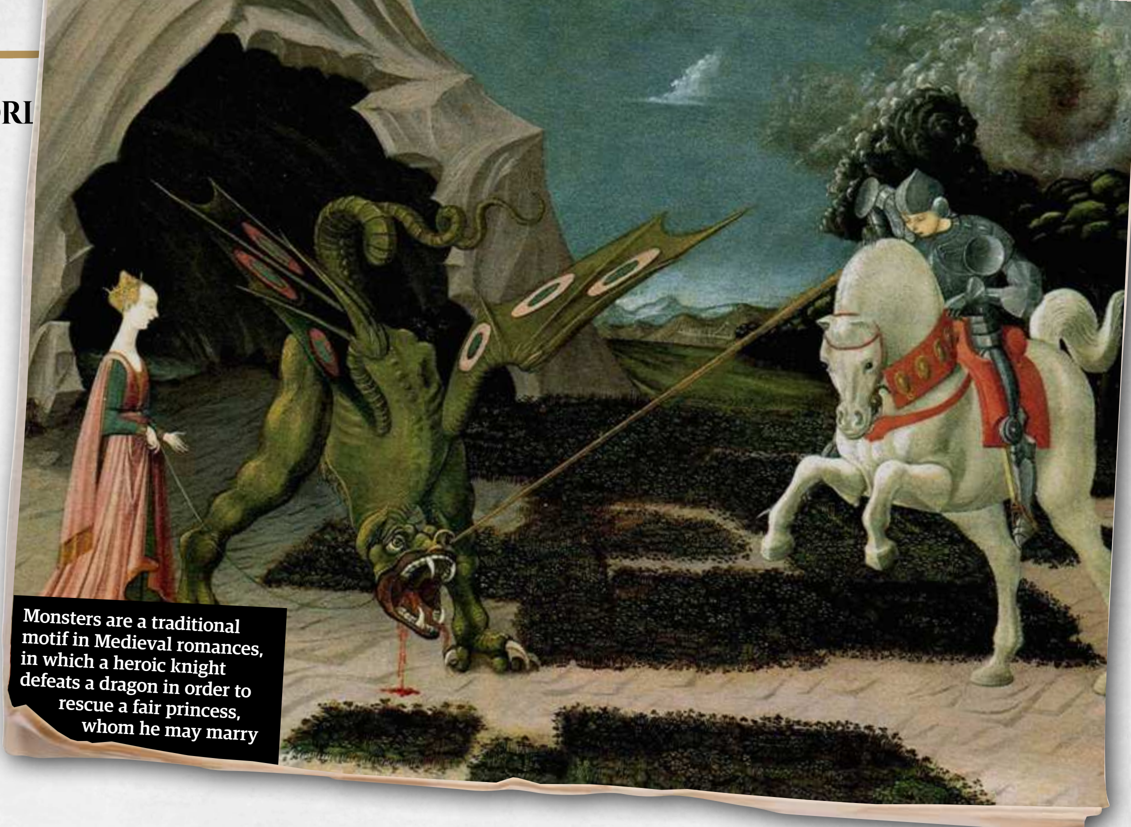
The epics of Homer offer a window on Greek culture before writing. The archaic period of Greece was a chaotic one with a patchwork of kingdoms where, later Greeks believed, the heroic offspring of their gods contended with monsters on a regular basis. Homer's Odyssey devotes several books to the various monsters that the wily Odysseus had to overcome. Odysseus, renowned as a man who told lies and told them well, regales us with stories of his own cleverness. Trapped in the cave of a cyclops he blinds the giant and rides out strapped to the underside of a sheep. In a decade of wandering the seas Odysseus loses his entire crew to various monsters and the whims of the gods, yet he himself survives. Even this early in the development of monster tales, we must question what we are hearing. Odysseus is a known weaver of fabulous stories. Should we be cheering his successes or pondering whether monsters exist at all?

While Odysseus makes us question the nature of monsters, Greek myth also gives us more straightforward tales of them. Heracles could not be more different to Odysseus. Heracles never met a problem that could not be overcome with brute strength and his trusty club. In the course of his 12 famous labours Heracles must capture the preternaturally swift Ceryneian hind of Artemis, slay the vast Nemean lion, steal the human-eating horses of Diomedes, and slay the multi-headed Hydra. In this myth we see all the varieties of monster.

Some, like the Nemean lion, are simply over-mighty versions of real animals. Others, like the horses of Diomedes, transcend the nature of the average horse. In the Hydra, whose heads regrow more numerous than ever unless cauterised, we see the true mythological monster, one that never has existed.

Later epics would also use monsters to reveal the heroism of their protagonists. In the Anglo-

"Zombies have a far greater lineage than the recent glut of undead films"

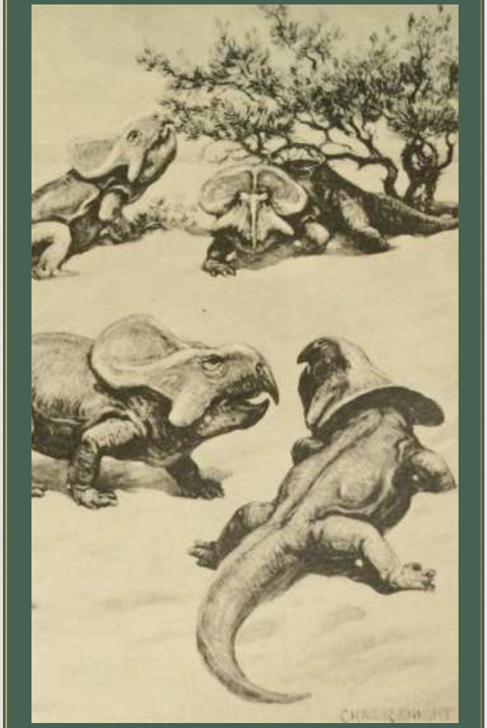


Monsters are a traditional motif in Medieval romances, in which a heroic knight defeats a dragon in order to rescue a fair princess, whom he may marry

BONES OF MONSTERS

On the beaches of Whitby, UK, locals often found strange stones. Coiled and black, they looked like nothing so much as petrified snakes. These so-called 'Snake Stones' were explained as snakes driven out by St Hilda when she built an abbey there and punished the serpents by turning them to stone. In fact they are ammonites, fossilised and extinct molluscs, but they show the deep links that can exist between fossils and folklore.

The most impressive fossils, such as those of dinosaurs, created the most impressive monsters. In Mongolia, the ancients believed, lived griffins - a creature with the body and limbs of a lion but the beaked head of an eagle. Some believe this creature came into being when local people discovered the remains of protoceratops, a lion-sized dinosaur with a beaked mouth. More recent fossils such as those of elephants may have led to the idea of a cyclops as the nasal cavity of their skulls looks like one large eye socket. Fossilised footprints also found their way into folklore. These trackways, impressed into solid stone, were thought to be left by magical creatures. In China they were sometimes considered to be the tracks left by dragons. Others thought the three-toed footprints of therapods belonged to huge and heavenly chickens.



Fossils may have inspired many legends of mythical beasts. The beaked dinosaur protoceratops may be the basis of the griffin

Saxon poem, the eponymous Beowulf must again and again face dreadful beings. He describes how he swam for five days and nights in the ocean carrying a sword and defeating nine sea monsters. In the course of the poem, Beowulf will fight with the wild Grendel, Grendel's mother, and a dragon. While Beowulf defeats the dragon he is mortally injured. Heroes cannot always escape unscathed from their battles. Yet it is Grendel, a wild man, who is best remembered as Beowulf's enemy. He cannot stand the sound of singing from a mead hall and so attacks it at night and slaughters those inside. Grendel is perhaps most memorable as he is most like a human. The author of *Beowulf* gives Grendel an excuse for his beastly behaviour – he is a descendent of the first murderer, Cain.

Monsters can be used symbolically to provide a non-human, 'other' enemy that the protagonist of a story has to confront

SYMBOLIC BEASTS

Grendel is just one example of a monster being used symbolically in folklore. Clearly he is meant to stand for all those who live outside the community, as he does not join in either their worship or their celebrations. When it comes to other monsters though, their symbolic value is defined not just by their nature but by the cultural atmosphere in which they are discussed.

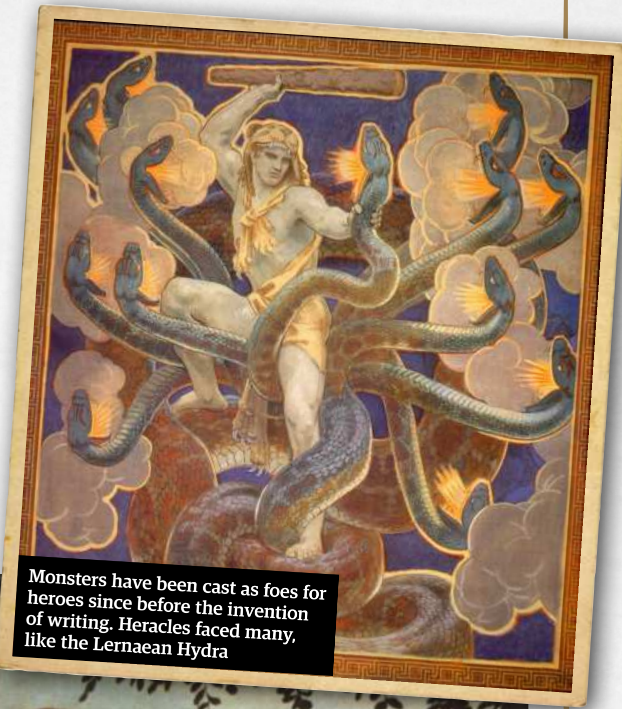
In the Christian Middle Ages of Europe, one of the most popular genres of book was the bestiary. Often lavishly illustrated, these tomes would reveal the strange wonders of nature to their readers. While some creatures we designed for entertainment (such as the bonnacon, which defended itself by projectile defecating) other entries were designed to teach culturally appropriate lessons. The phoenix was long known in many cultures but in European bestiaries its fiery death and rebirth was paralleled to Jesus' resurrection. The bestiaries also freely mixed legendary with real animals. Pelicans are real but they do not, as bestiaries suggested, feed their young with their own blood, no matter how well it stands in for the Eucharist.

Unicorns were another favourite beast in many cultures. Known from the ancient world and the Bible, the unicorn found a key role in medieval mythology. Representing the incarnation of Jesus they could only be trapped by a female virgin, who in turn represented the Virgin Mary. Other cultures found the unicorn less mystical and their authors simply describe the unicorn as a horned horse. Marco Polo thought he had encountered one, which he described as being huge and grey, with a black horn and a penchant for rolling in mud and ooze. Despite looking nothing like the courtly unicorns of Europe, Polo was only able to interpret the reality of a rhino by linking it to the unicorn he expected.

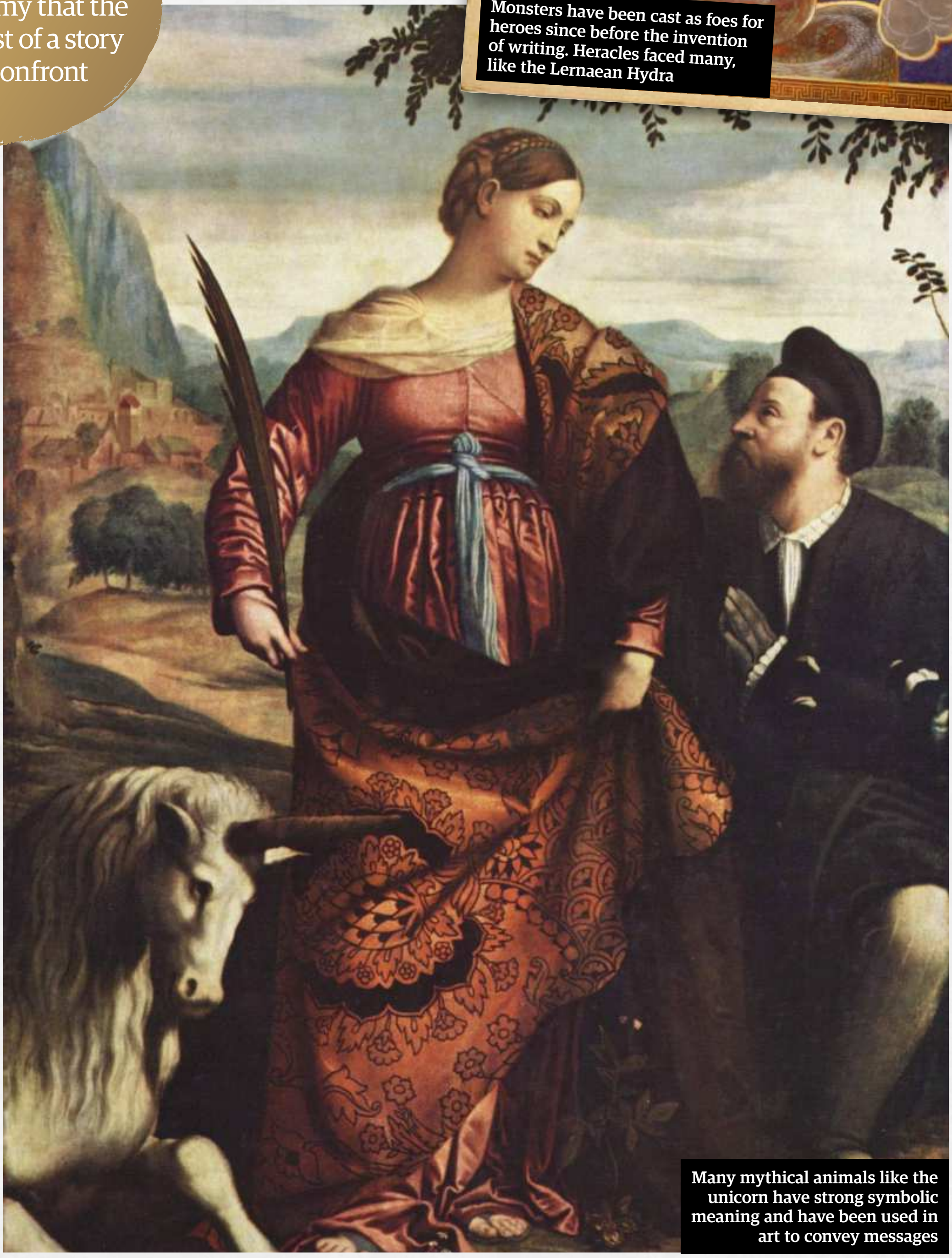
Perhaps the most widespread legendary animal is the dragon. Beasts that can be called dragons are found in ancient Mesopotamia, the Bible, and ancient Chinese tales, among many others.

Proto-Indo-European legends of a serpent slain by a hero have found their ways into many mythologies. Over time the meaning of the dragon has evolved along with the physical attributes dragons are supposed to have.

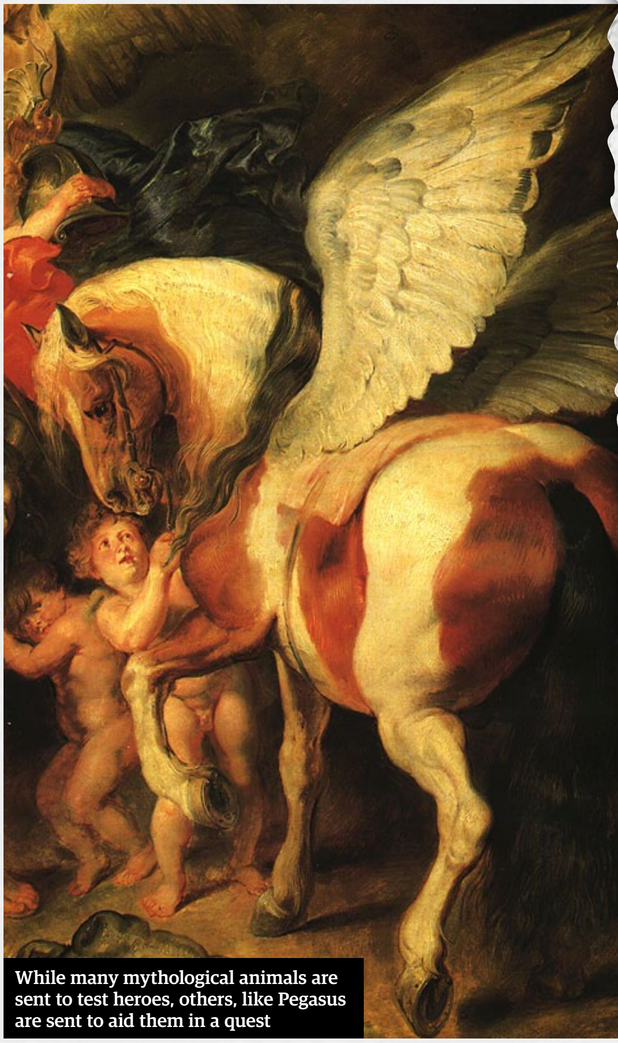
In the East dragons are often shown with a snake-like body but with four clawed limbs. They represent wisdom and excellence, with the Emperors of China appropriating them as a symbol of their power. These dragons are strongly associated with water and the vagaries of weather and are even credited with its control.



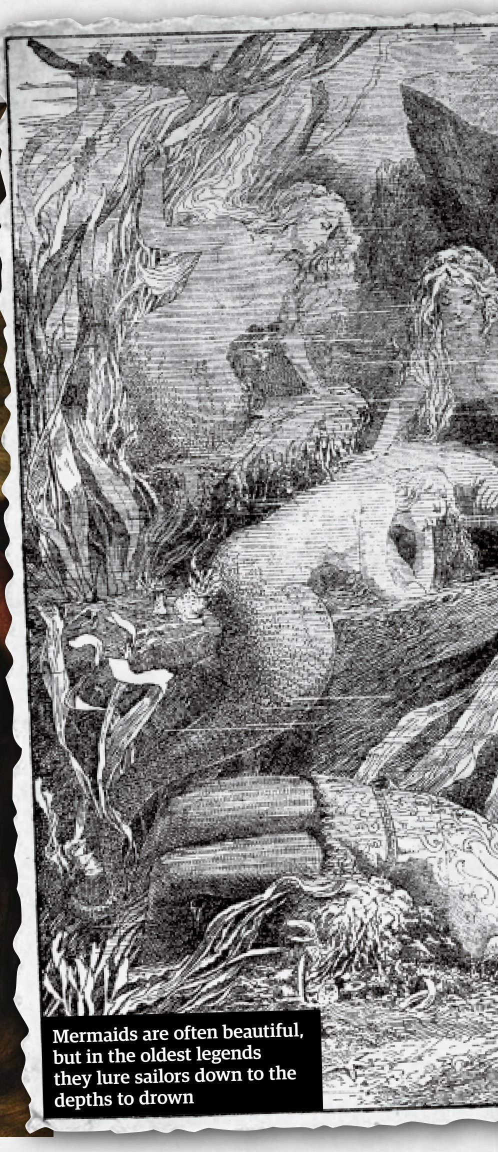
Monsters have been cast as foes for heroes since before the invention of writing. Heracles faced many, like the Lernaean Hydra



Many mythical animals like the unicorn have strong symbolic meaning and have been used in art to convey messages



While many mythological animals are sent to test heroes, others, like Pegasus are sent to aid them in a quest



Mermaids are often beautiful, but in the oldest legends they lure sailors down to the depths to drown

In the West the ancient serpents became winged reptiles, some able to breathe flames, which were used as a test of heroism for knights. These dragons had a habit of hoarding gold and jewels and kidnapping maidens.

While the Eastern dragons might impart wisdom, the Western dragon was simply a step in the hero's path to glory. Many holy men, such as St George, showed their saintly status by slaughtering a dragon. St Margaret was one of the few women to free themselves from the grasp of a dragon. Of course, in her case, it was not simply a dragon that she slew, but the Devil himself.

BEASTS BELOW US

Images of St Margaret often show her emerging from the belly of a dragon having prayed her way out. The idea of monsters as aspects of the diabolical are as widespread as the idea of monsters. The Devil is hardly ever shown as the epitome of beauty he possessed before the fall but is instead depicted as a monstrous figure. The archangel Michael tramples him in the form of a dragon. Other Christian images of the Devil give him animal features such as bull's horns, a goat's legs, or porcine features. The mixing of species God had created was just another one of the Devil's perversions.

Monsters can represent the unknown because we so rarely see them for ourselves. It is no wonder then that the afterlife, of which we can have no direct knowledge, is often associated with dreadful creatures. The dark deities that rule over the dead in polytheistic religions are often depicted as monsters.

Hel in Norse myth is physically half a living woman and half a rotting corpse. Apep in Egyptian belief is part hippo, part crocodile, and part lion, and waits to devour the souls of those found unworthy of eternal life.

The placing of the Devil in Hell along with his deformed demons demonstrates how monsters toyed with God's creation. By mixing aspects of his perfect animals, demons and hellish beasts were thought of as insults to the deity. While non-existent monsters may be able to deal with the abuse heaped on them, this belief in the devilish nature of the deformed could have disastrous consequences for humans. Anyone with a birthmark or a disability could be viewed as ungodly.

MONSTERS IN NATURE

Monsters in myth and legend often have a meaning related to the narrative. There are other types of monster though, which were either thought to be real or that had evolved from nature itself. Where humans are relatively powerless they imagine other powers to be in control. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in the legends of monsters inhabiting water and the sea. A sailor must face the truth that the abyss they glide over is infinitely more powerful than them. For those on the shore who never saw their loved ones return, they had to explain how it was that skilled mariners could be lost at sea.

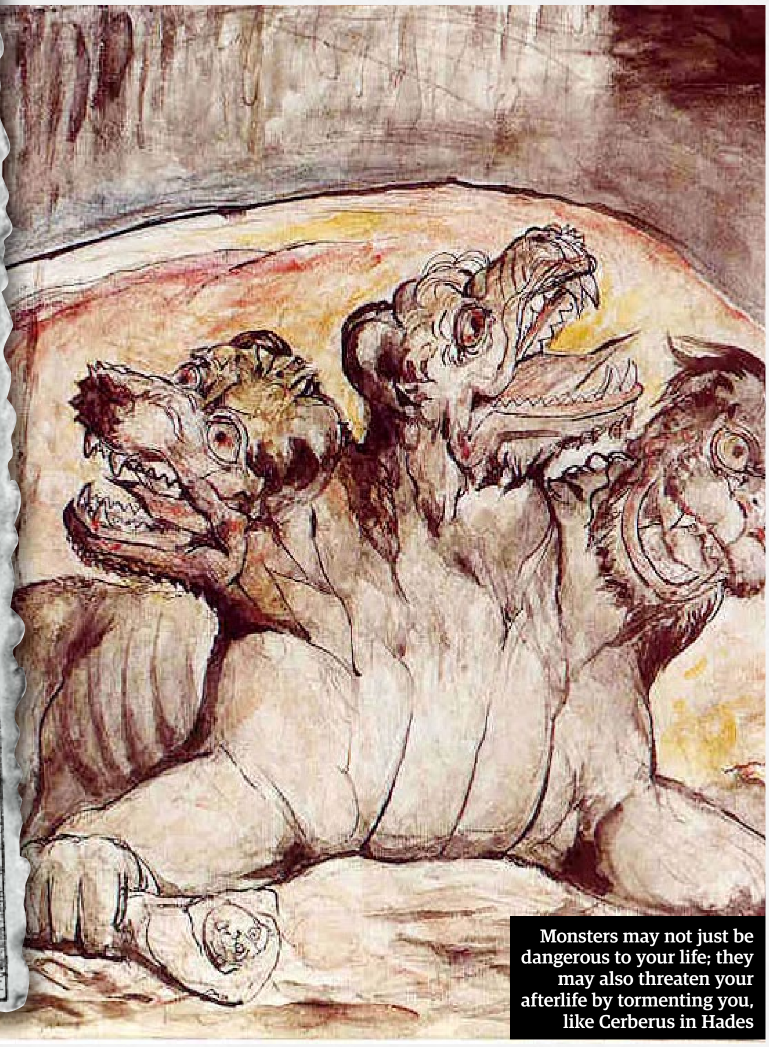
Odysseus, whose travels we noted earlier, faced many such marine monsters. At one point he had to steer his ship between the monsters Scylla and Charybdis. These two lived on rocks separated by a narrow strait. To steer away from one put your ship within reach of the other. Scylla is described as a woman with a pack of dogs instead of legs, ravenous for human flesh. Charybdis, on the other hand, is not described and is far more terrifying for our ignorance of it. Odysseus is advised to sail closer to Scylla, for while she may snatch six men from the deck, Charybdis will smash the entire ship. In later mythology Charybdis came to represent a whirlpool that would suck down the unwary. Jason and the Argonauts had to face two cliffs that would crash together and crush a ship. Rocks and shoals have always been sailors' worst foes.

> Monsters are often used to symbolise the nature of evil, often represented as ugly, devouring, and unnatural

Mermaids, those beings mixed together from humans and fish, fulfilled a number of roles in sea folklore. In British folklore they are often omens of ill-luck and they lure men to their deaths, as they often do in African myths.

The Hindu tale of Suvannamaccha, the golden mermaid, and Hanuman, shows mermaids as at first unhelpful beings, but love soon blossoms between the two and mermaids come to Hanuman's aid. Besides mermaids we find sea serpents, krakens, kelpies, and numerous other fantastic beasts populating the depths and explaining the untold numbers of unlucky sailors who disappeared at sea.

While monsters can sometimes be seen as representing some specific aspect of nature, in the absence of a rational explanation, others were simply thought to be a part of creation never seen before. To the ancient mind the world was inhabited with a near-infinite variety of beasts. Herodotus has been called both the Father of History and the Father of Lies. His research led him to look into all aspects of the world he sought to describe, and he did not hesitate to include monsters. According to him



Monsters may not just be dangerous to your life; they may also threaten your afterlife by tormenting you, like Cerberus in Hades

> "To the ancient mind the world was inhabited with a near-infinite variety of beasts"

the lands beyond those known to the Greeks were swarming with unusual creatures. In the deserts of the east, he said you would find huge and hairy ants that in digging up their nests would reveal deposits of gold. Some believe he was passing on a garbled description of marmots, who indeed do sometimes dig up gold when they burrow. This is an example of how monsters can be born from half-heard information from far away. Other legendary beasts in Herodotus' writings clearly come from the tendency of humans to fill in the unknown areas of maps with "Here be dragons". In the wilderness beyond Libya he places dog-headed men, and humans with eyes in their chest. Even when Herodotus heard of things he could not believe in (such as goat-legged men, and tribes of werewolves) he always included them, as he knew his audience would love to hear about them. Herodotus knew that the human appetite for the monstrous is an eternal part of our nature and a subject that will always fascinate us.

WHY HUMANS MAKE MONSTERS

Monsters will always be with us. No fantasy book or film can escape their symbolism. We will always look at nature and wonder what else could have been created. Monsters reflect the human need to shape the world in our image and that is why monsters have always existed as a motif in myth and fairy tale. The Big Bad Wolf tells our children that the world is a scary place and that they must not stray. Monsters are always beings that transgress in some way and bend the natural order of things and so work to show people what is normal and acceptable. That may be an overly pessimistic view of monsters and other beasts however. It may be that legendary creatures are meant to spur us to always see what is on the other side of the hill and discover new wonders. And perhaps the most important lesson taught to us by tales of monsters is not that the world is full of terrible things – we all already know that – but that with bravery and fortitude, we can overcome them.

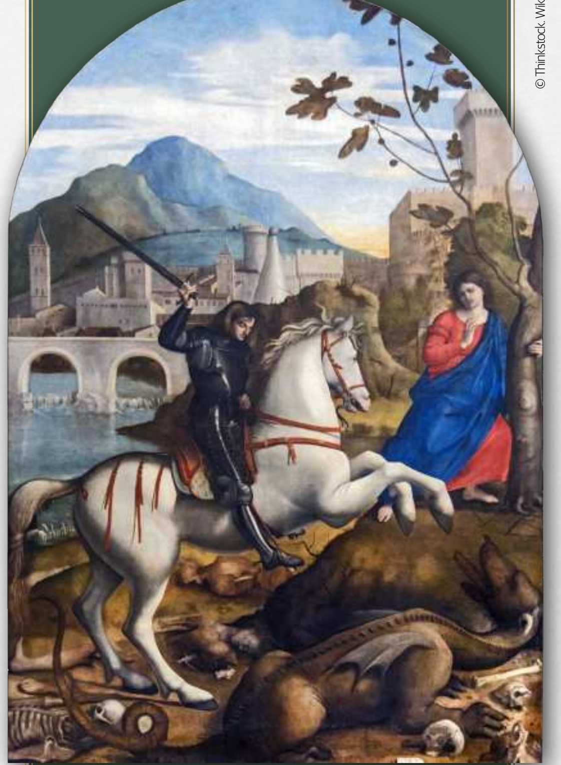
THE DRAGON HUNTERS

Dragons in the West have always been a favoured foe for heroes. When Heracles was tasked with recovering the golden apples of the Hesperides he first had to overcome the hundred-headed dragon Ladon that coiled itself around them.

The idea of dragons gathering great hoards of wealth perhaps made them a tempting target, but their inhumanity made them excellent fodder for folk tales. Since a dragon is not a person they may be slain with impunity.

In Germanic myth, wingless dragons called lindworms could be found in barrows guarding cursed treasure. In the Norse stories of Sigurd the hero must retrieve treasure from a dragon called Fafnir. Instead of charging in and fighting him directly, Sigurd digs a trench and waits for the dragon to slither overhead before disembowelling him.

Later heroes used force instead of cunning to prove themselves against dragons. The Christian ideal of a knight often saw them having to rescue maidens from the clutches of a dragon. St George is the most famous dragon slayer in Western art but his myth borrows heavily from the legend of Perseus and Andromeda, which predates the notion of chivalry by millennia.



Dragons have always been the favoured beast for brave knights to fight, especially if a maiden requires rescuing

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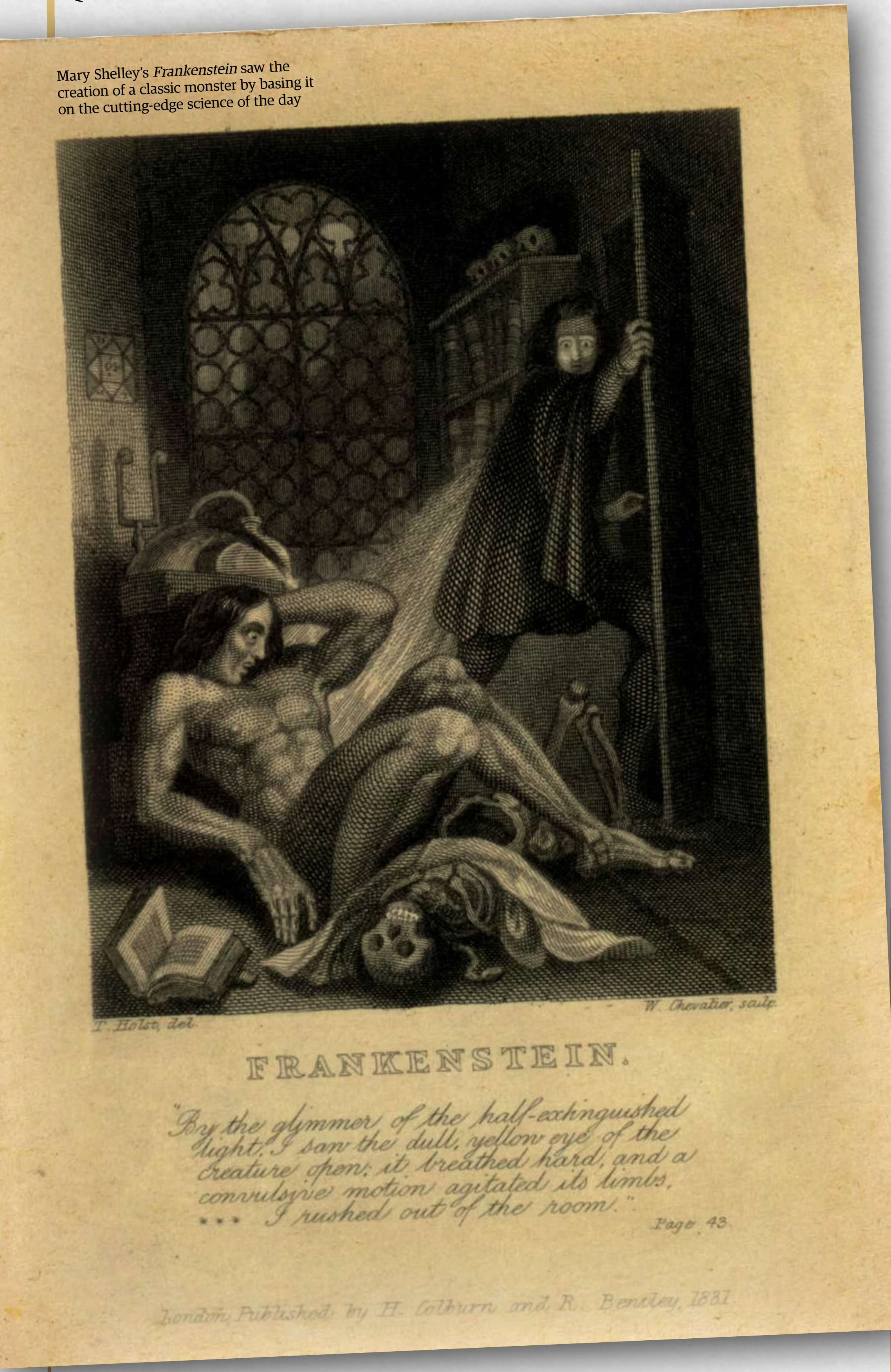


Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* saw the creation of a classic monster by basing it on the cutting-edge science of the day

T. Holst, del.

W. Chevalier, sculp.

FRANKENSTEIN.

"By the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull, yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.
*** I rushed out of the room."

Page 43.

London, Published by H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1831

MONSTERS OF FICTION

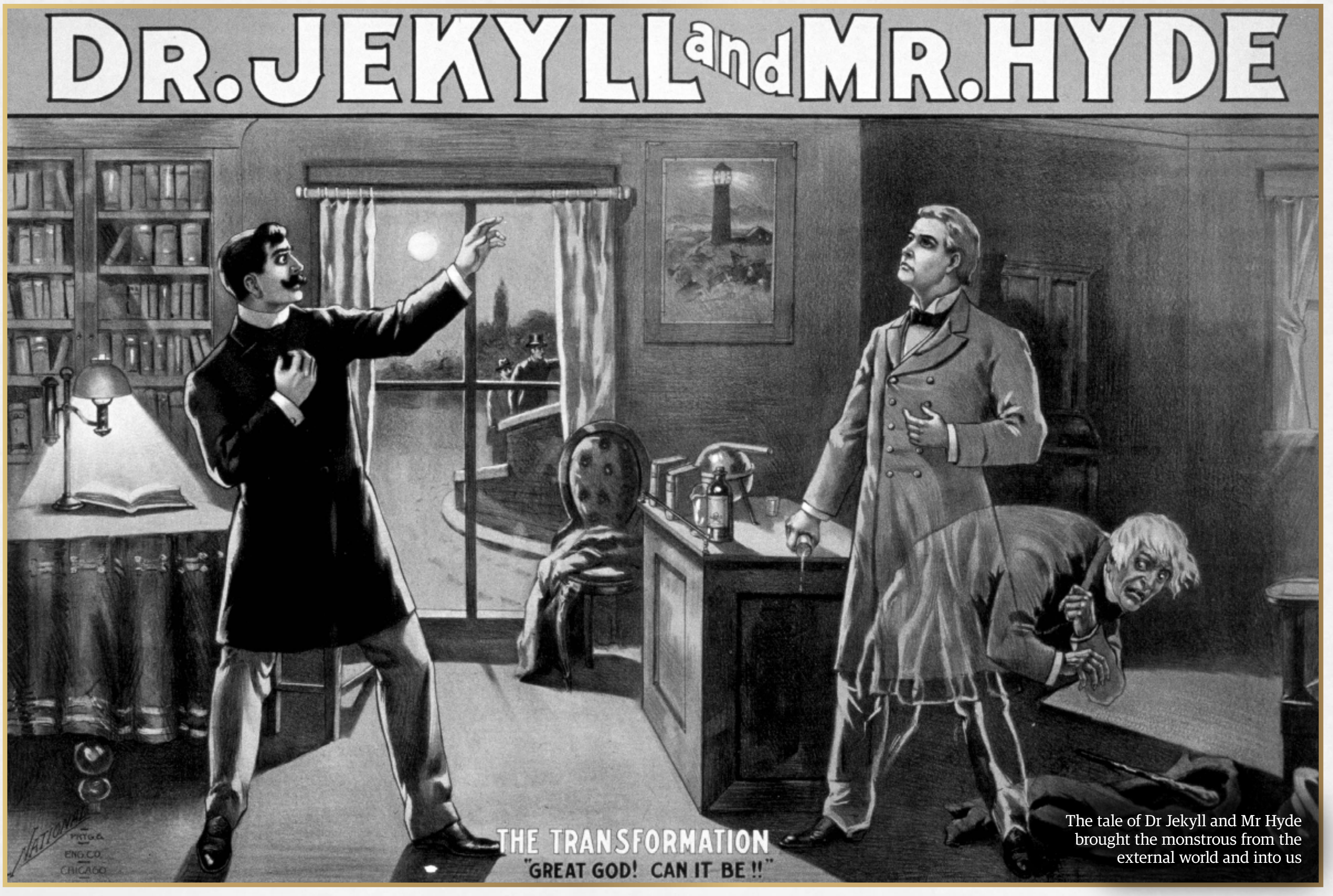
While ancient monsters often served to reinforce societal norms or offer a chance for heroic growth the modern monster can reinforce the powerless nature of humanity in the face of the unknown. In Horace Walpole's novel *The Castle of Otranto* two servants are scared out of their wits by the appearance of a giant foot. This is not the beginning of *Monty Python* but instead the origin of the Gothic in literature.

The Castle of Otranto was published in 1764 and began the mania for Gothic tales of horror. In the story, which takes place in a crumbling castle riddled with ghosts and curses, a giant armoured spirit stalks the dark halls. Despite all the best efforts of the characters the ghost returns. "A clap of thunder at that instant shook the castle to its foundations; the earth rocked, and the clank of more than mortal armour was heard behind. Frederic and Jerome thought the last day was at hand." As the ghost destroys the castle the characters are left to ponder what has happened. How do you fight a ghost? And how can you fight fate?

The apotheosis of the Gothic novel and its monsters was reached in Mary Shelley's 1818 *Frankenstein*. When a callow young medical student named Victor Frankenstein embarks on a mission to create life he transgresses against nature and lets lose a force he cannot control. The monster he creates in the novel is a thinking and feeling creature but marked by the unnatural method of his creation. Thrown into a life he never asked for the monster hunts down his uncaring creator.

Monsters like the vampire Dracula explore both human fears of death and the differences of class and economic power

"The monster of Frankenstein shows a deeper psychological insight than many that appear in mythology and folklore"


DR. JEKYLL and MR. HYDE
THE TRANSFORMATION
"GREAT GOD! CAN IT BE!!"
NATIONAL PTG & ENG. CO. CHICAGO

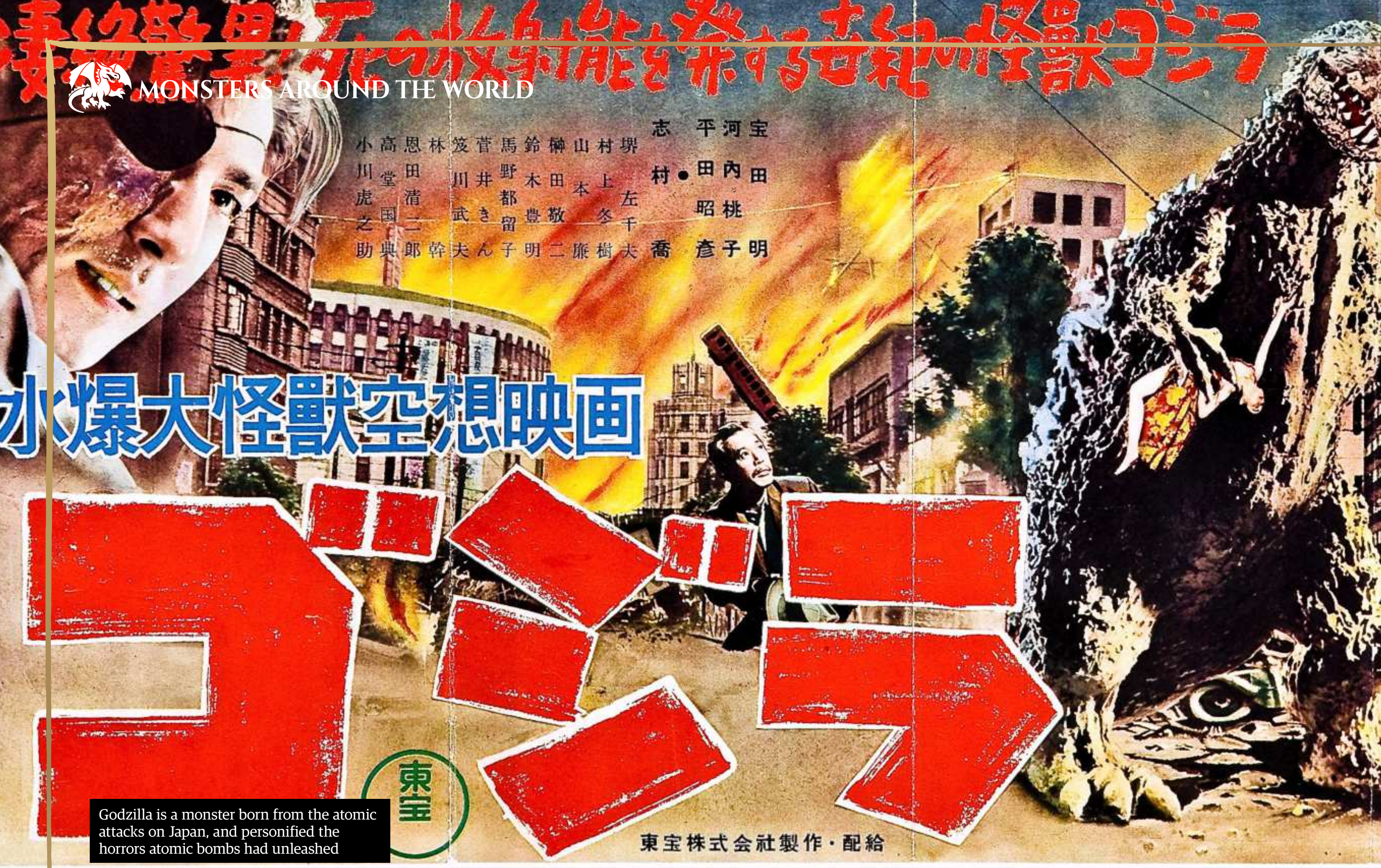
The tale of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde brought the monstrous from the external world and into us

Frankenstein was written in a time when science was making extraordinary advancements that seemed to push at the boundaries of what mortals should know. Luigi Galvani was performing experiments with electricity and frog legs that appeared to reanimate dead flesh. Victor Frankenstein's fictional experiments pulled what was considered God's creative power into human hands. Frankenstein was also appropriating the procreative powers of women to give birth into male hands. For that, narratively, he had to be punished. The monster of Frankenstein shows a deeper psychological insight than many that appear in mythology and folklore. He is a monster in that he is beyond nature but as a creation of a human he is a reflection of the human condition. You cannot blame his quest for revenge on primitive ignorance – this is a monster that reads Plutarch, Milton, and Goethe. The more he experiences of a humanity that utterly rejects him the more he comes to loath them. The heart of the modern monster is the questioning of whether the creature or humanity is the real monster. Other authors took up the challenge of how to present monsters in literature. Guy de Maupassant wrote a short story called *The Horla* about bringing the monster within a single individual. In the tale a man is overcome by a psychic creature that latches on to him and causes him to do terrible things. Yet at first the protagonist cannot tell that it is an evil outsider making him do these crimes. Robert Louis Stevenson created a fully internal monster in his *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Jekyll uses a serum to transform himself into the monstrous Hyde. But it was not that Hyde performed evil deeds in opposition to Jekyll; the doctor had used the serum to indulge his base desires. Science can be put to wicked uses but the will to do evil is inside us.

> Monsters are at the heart of Gothic fiction, which in turn influences modern-day stories, movies and TV shows

MONSTERS AND THE MOVING PICTURES

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde leapt from the pages of the book almost immediately. Stage adaptations soon


宝田明
河内桃子
平田昭彦
志村喬
堺左千夫
村上冬樹
山本廉
榊田敬二
鈴木豊明
馬野都留子
菅井きん
笈川武夫
林幹
恩田清二郎
高堂国典
小川虎之助
水爆大怪獸空想映画
ゴジラ
東宝
東宝株式会社製作・配給

Godzilla is a monster born from the atomic attacks on Japan, and personified the horrors atomic bombs had unleashed

came and in 1908 it became the first American horror film. While no copies of this original film survive, monsters have never since been absent from movie screens.

In the silent film era all the classic horror novels were plundered for monsters. Frankenstein's monster, the golem, and vampires were soon stalking audiences as black and white projections. As a means of mass entertainment monsters were a commodity but also a means of social commentary. No one paying a few cents for a movie ticket would fail to see the message behind an aristocratic count who literally drank the blood of poor people.

The real boom in monster movies began in the aftermath of World War II and the dropping of the atomic bombs. Once again humanity seemed to have transgressed and seized a power not meant for them. As punishment for their nuclear hubris humans are targeted by atomic monsters.

In 1953 the first of them emerged in the film *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* when the titular beast is awoken by a nuclear test and ravages towns and cities. This beast was not the only one to seek revenge for an atomic bomb. In Japan in 1954 the first *Godzilla* appeared. The director modelled the effects of 'Gojira' on the aftermath of the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The texture of the reptile's skin was based on the horrific scars suffered by victims exposed to the blasts.

Humans had both created the monster and were the monsters. While nuclear weapons had woken up Godzilla and other monsters it also created some. In 1954's *Them!* ants mutated by the first atomic tests reach a monstrous size and begin to kill humans. Other films like *World Without End* and *Beginning of the End* saw radiation mutating ordinary spiders and locusts into monsters.

Sometimes modern horror films turn to ancient concepts to create their monsters. While hybrid creatures like the Sphinx and lamassu were produced by the supernatural, in *The Fly* it is science that crosses the boundaries of species. *The Fly* sees a scientist intent on inventing teleportation, only to find himself spliced with the DNA of a fly. Once again the monster is made internal as the scientist is transformed bodily into something entirely inhuman.

Outside of the adult horror genre we also find monsters in children's literature, TV, and films. Everyone has a monster that has haunted their dreams since childhood, yet children love to hear a monstrous story. Parents love to tell them because they can teach children potent lessons. If there is a troll under every bridges it will stop a child wandering off. You'll never take sweets from a stranger if there's a risk they might whisk you off to their gingerbread house in the woods.

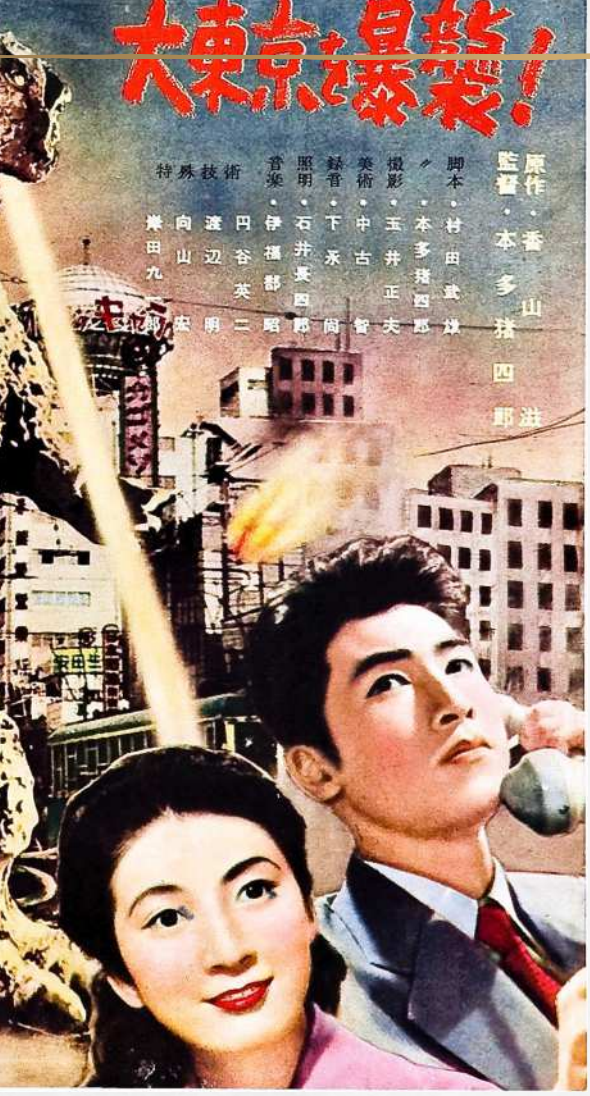
The monsters used in children's fiction also help to reinforce the sense of a group. 'Outsiders are dangerous' is at the heart of many monster tales. Monsters are also useful in a practical sense for film makers. It would never do for a child to see human blood, but if a monster is slain then censors will happily see their black blood splash about.

MONSTERS OF THE MIND

The medium may have changed but monsters have always been with us. Whether it was stories told around campfires or on huge and immersive movie screens there is something in the human mind that craves a monster.

Anthropologists who have studied various societies see how natural disasters and climactic events can give rise to monsters. An earthquake is one of the most terrifying events on Earth. Yet without knowledge of plate tectonics it is entirely inexplicable. No wonder that in many cultures it was thought that a monster must be to blame. In Japan earthquakes were blamed on a giant catfish called Namazu who caused the earth to shake with its thrashing. Volcanoes, storms, and tornadoes all found their explanations in the malevolence of monsters.

For Carl Jung there was a shared human subconscious that explained why certain images and motifs emerge again and again in world mythology. While the Hero is one of Jung's main archetypes there is also the Shadow. The Shadow is the embodiment of the aspects of one's personality they want to hide. As civilisation developed, the baser instincts of humans had to be suppressed. "Everyone carries a shadow and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is," Jung thought. By creating monsters humans


大東京を暴襲!
原作・香山滋
監督・本多猪四郎
脚本・村田武雄
〃・本多猪四郎
撮影・玉井正夫
美術・中古智
録音・下永尚
照明・石井長四郎
音楽・伊福部昭
特殊技術
円谷英二
渡辺明
向山宏
岸田九一郎

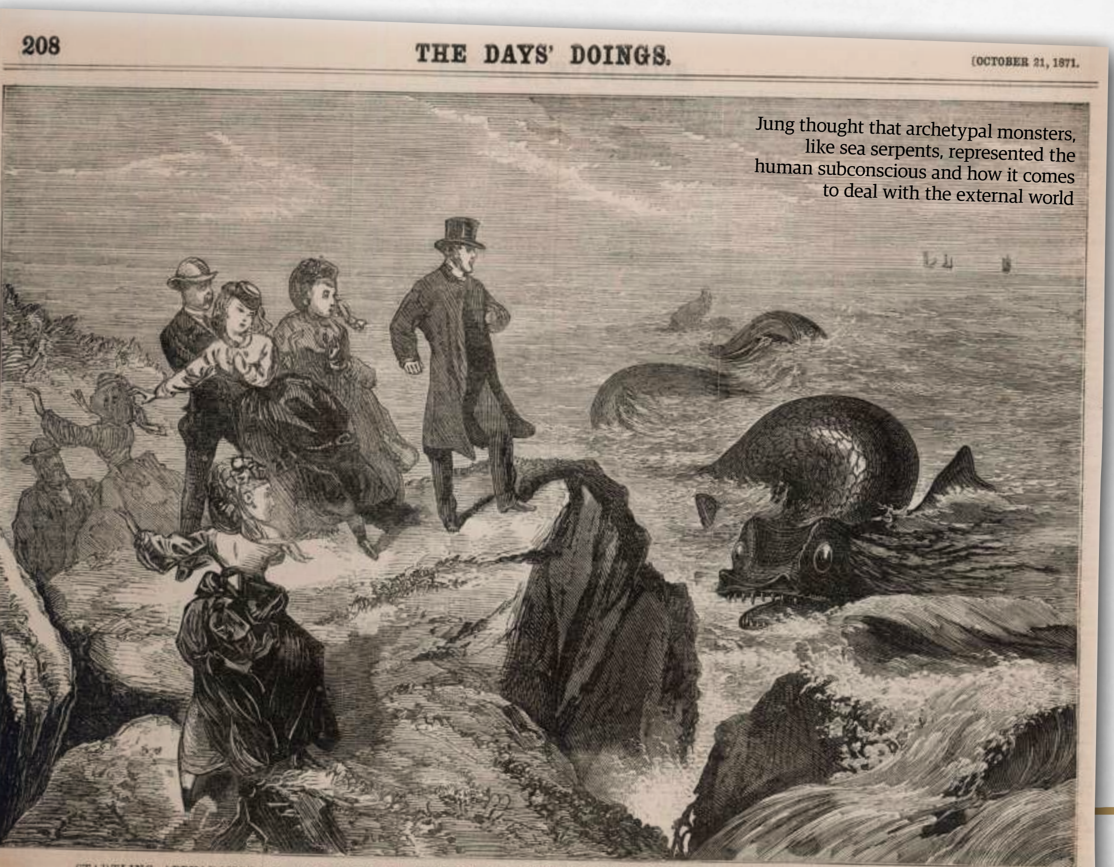
> “Sometimes modern horror films turn to ancient concepts to create their monsters”

Jung believed that society created and shared archetypal phenomena, in which humanity’s darker impulses are often symbolised by monstrous imagery

are expressing feelings and fears they must otherwise deny.

The development of psychology as a science has been matched by an increasing complexity in the monsters we talk about. While early monsters were fairly simple aberrations of the natural order, modern monsters tend to be those that address our darkest fears. The Babadook of the 2014 film haunts so many viewers because it is the manifested shadow of depression and mental illness.

While science has banished many monsters from the map it seems that as long as there are humans there will be dark spaces where we project our fears and where something will always be lurking.


208
THE DAYS' DOINGS.
[OCTOBER 21, 1871.

Jung thought that archetypal monsters, like sea serpents, represented the human subconscious and how it comes to deal with the external world

NOT SO MONSTROUS MONSTERS

When a young boy called Max is called a “wild thing” by his mother and sent to bed, he instead sails away to an island full of really wild things with terrible teeth and terrible claws. Max subdues these monsters and becomes their king. But Max soon misses his loved ones and goes home. Maurice Sendak’s book is just one of the ways that monsters have become decidedly friendly. While the bogeyman in the closet is nightmare-fuel for many children, some stories have made them lovable. *Monsters, Inc.* saw a whole society of monsters that generated power from the screams of children. When they discover that a child’s laughter is even more powerful, they reorder their culture away from scares. The film also taught children that monsters were more scared of them than they were of monsters. Sometimes monsters can even be harnessed as pets and companions. While Pokémon games and cartoons see elemental beings unleashing their powers against each other in fierce battles, the ‘pocket monsters’ are not unthinking beasts. Many episodes of the cartoon *Pokémon* resolve when humans and pokémon learn to coexist or develop friendships. Even the most terrible monster can be tamed, we tell children, if we just extend humanity to those who are different from us.

RIGGING
ROAR
SCREAM
ROAR
GRWL
R = G
YOU NEED A BIG TO ROAR!

Not all monsters are scary - some are designed to teach children that not all those who look different are beastly

© Wiki/ Jonathan Deamer, John Bauer, Getty images, Alamy

DRAGONS

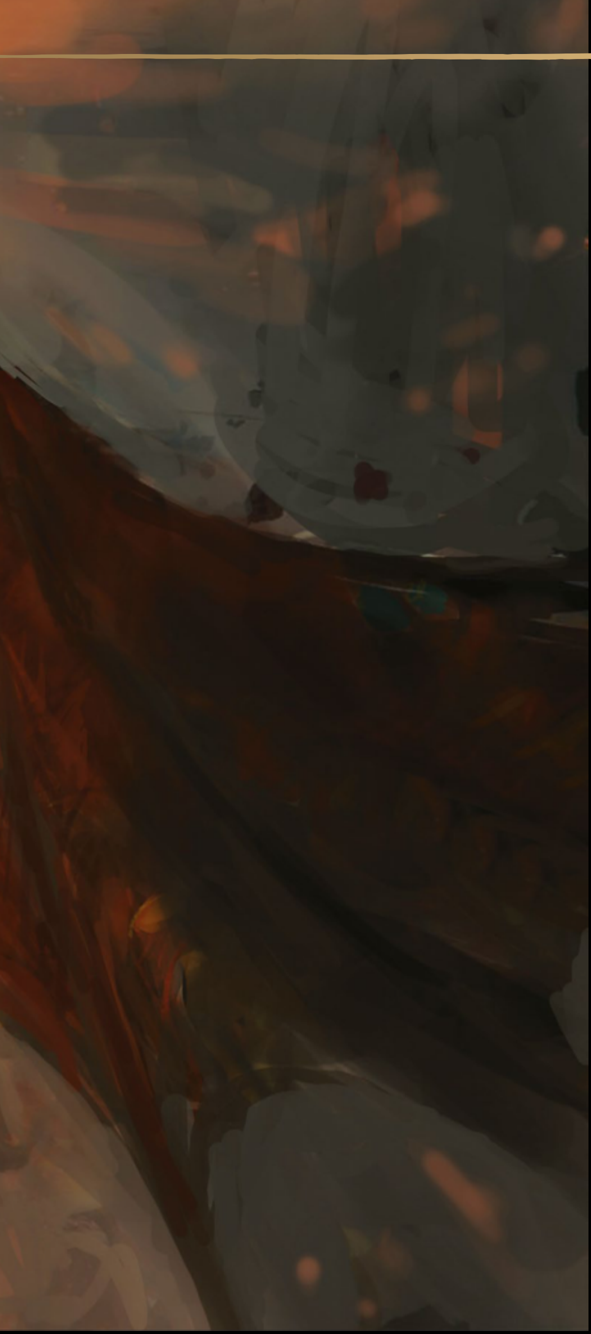
Four legs bad, no legs good? Why dragons in their various guises are a staple of folklore all around the world

Written by Willow Winsham

Who hasn't, as a child, been fascinated and terrified in equal measure by tales of terrible winged, fire-breathing dragons abducting fairytale princesses and laying waste to the land around them? Indeed, stories of such fearsome beasts living in caves where they hoard untold riches are a staple of many a story.

The original dragons of folklore and belief however were actually large, four-legged serpents that featured in the myths and legends of the ancient Near East. Unlike modern dragons, these specimens had no wings, and include Apep from the mythology of ancient Egypt, the 16-yard long, flint-headed God of Chaos, and the Leviathan from the Hebrew Bible.

The dragons found in Western folklore from the Middle Ages onwards are what most people today would recognise as a dragon. With four legs, breathing fire, a magnificent beast with wings and horns, these dragons were often troublesome, and many stories feature a quest to defeat one, often after many have already failed and been devoured by the monster.



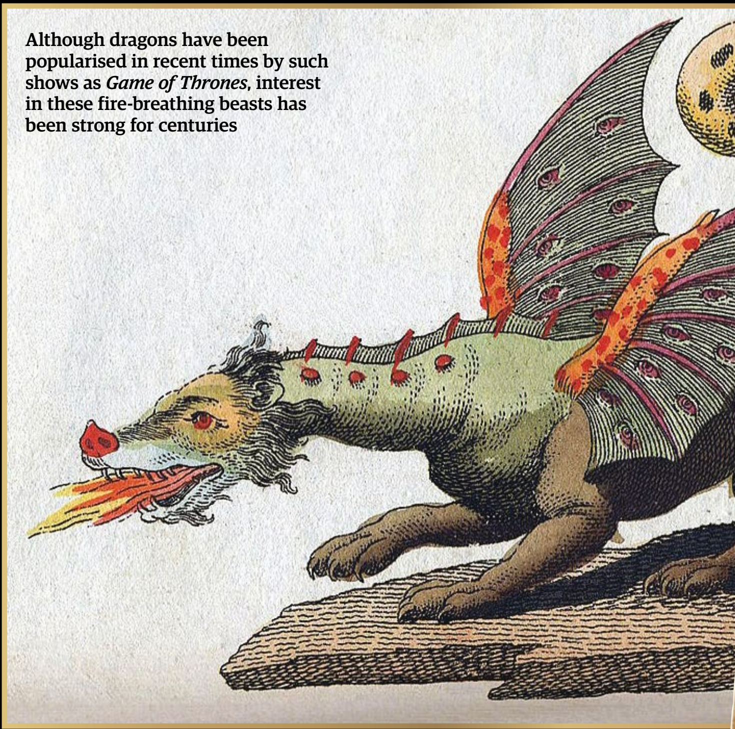
> “Western dragons with two legs rather than four are known as wyverns and are legendary guardians of the River Thames”

Typical in English folklore, one such tale tells of the Bisterne Dragon, a vicious creature finally defeated by a knight, whose body is turned into a hill as a reminder of the tale. Other dragons are famous for hoarding treasure.

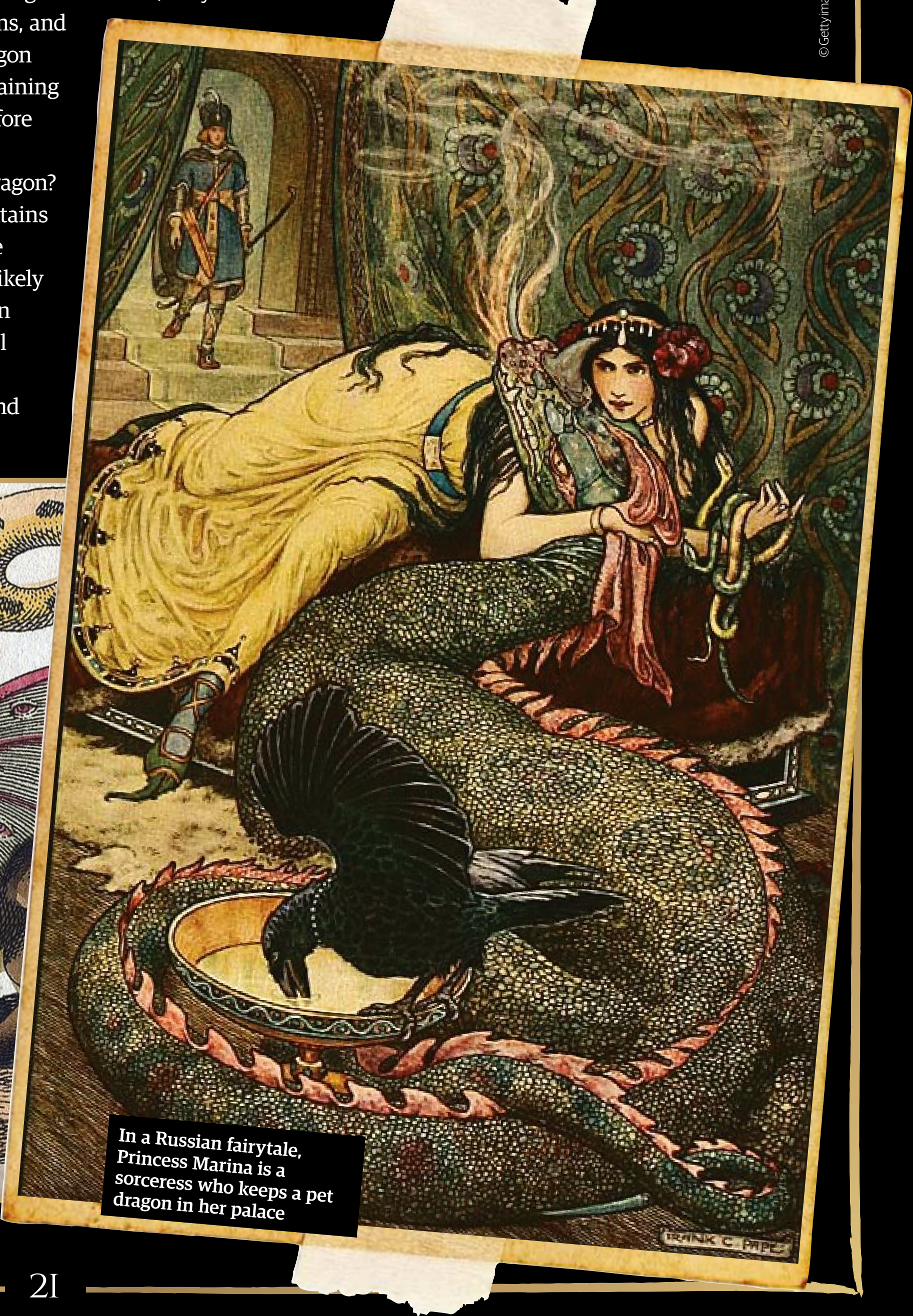
Slavic dragons, on the other hand, are multi-headed and fire-breathing, with the Russian zmei, Zmey Gorynych, having as many as 12 heads in some tellings. Gorynych was said to cause eclipses by swallowing the sun. According to Slavic lore, the most dangerous of snakes, the adder, on reaching a century old, would grow wings and transform into a dragon. Dragons are also linked to controlling the weather; they were known to cause storms, and one tale tells of a dragon causing a flood by draining a lake with its tail before releasing the torrent.

Hoping to find a dragon? Hunting in the mountains or hidden deep in the forests are the most likely locations. The Russian chudo-yudo, potential child of Baba Yaga, however, is to be found in water, and, due to his weather-controlling abilities, is often held responsible for times of drought and famine.

Despite their bad press, not all dragons are malevolent in nature. The snake-like, four legged Chinese dragons are associated with power and luck, and in Japan, dragons are known for granting wishes. In Bulgaria and Serbia, dragons are believed to stand guard over crops as they grow, preventing attack from lurking demons. Dragons with two legs are known as wyverns and are legendary guardians of the River Thames.

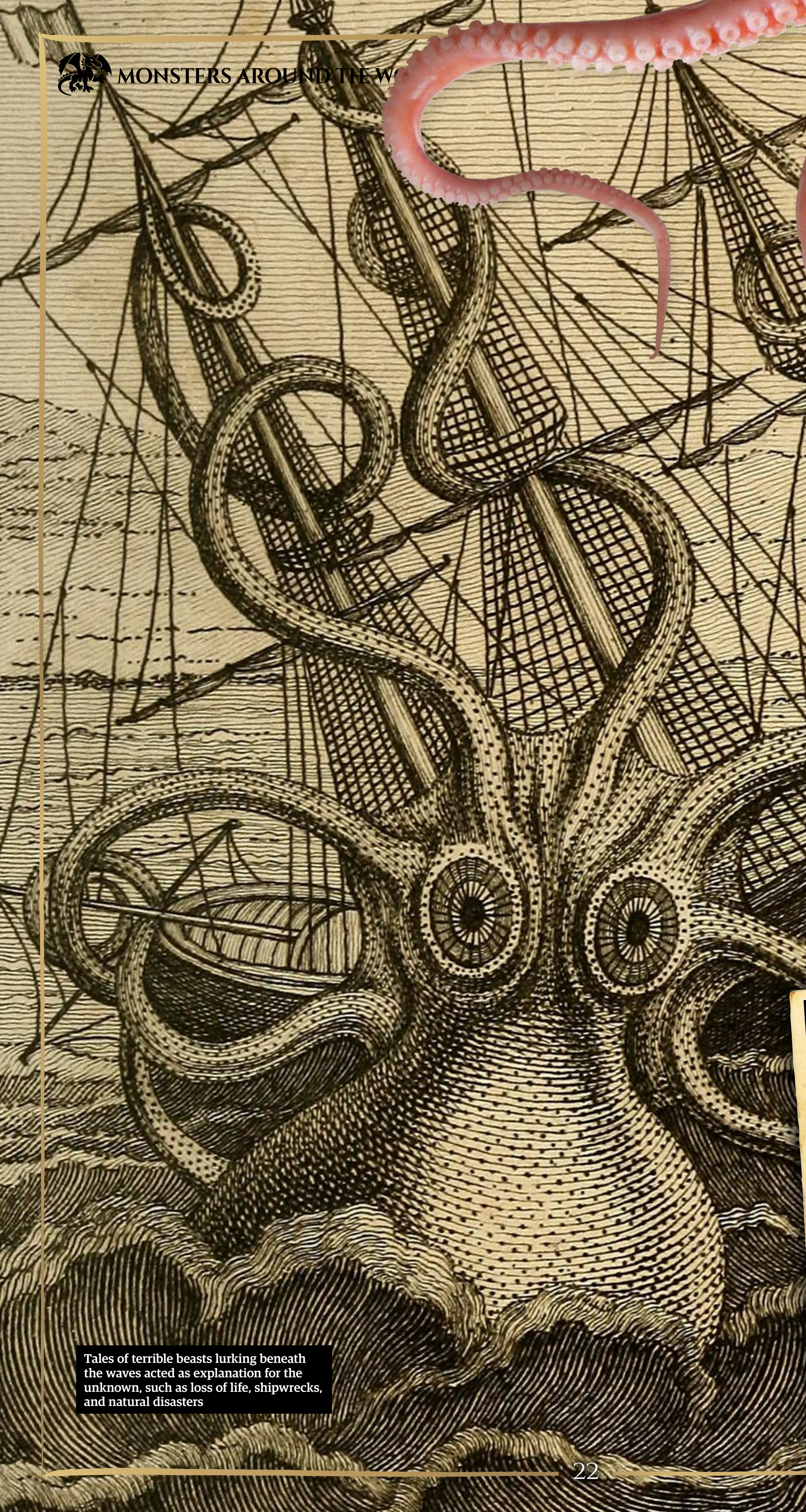


Although dragons have been popularised in recent times by such shows as *Game of Thrones*, interest in these fire-breathing beasts has been strong for centuries

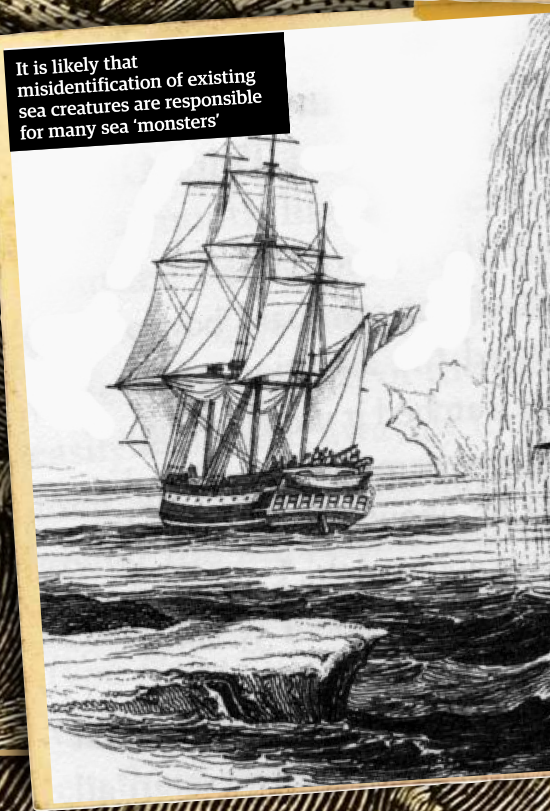


In a Russian fairytale, Princess Marina is a sorceress who keeps a pet dragon in her palace

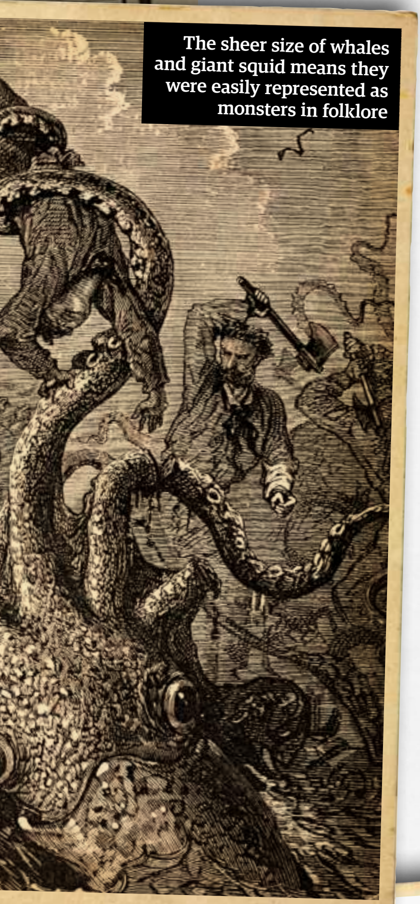
© Getty images



Tales of terrible beasts lurking beneath the waves acted as explanation for the unknown, such as loss of life, shipwrecks, and natural disasters



It is likely that misidentification of existing sea creatures are responsible for many sea 'monsters'



The sheer size of whales and giant squid means they were easily represented as monsters in folklore

SEA MONSTERS

With the depths of the seas less explored than the surface of the Moon, it's no surprise that we've populated them with fantastical creatures

Written by Willow Winsham

Tales of large, mysterious creatures that lurk beneath the waves feature in folklore wherever a civilisation has contact with the sea. Their size, and elusive and often hostile or violent nature, reflects one of humankind's greatest fears and preoccupations: the unpredictable nature of the sea. These denizens of the deep can cause destruction and chaos, drowning sailors in their hundreds, or swallowing a ship whole without breaking a sweat.

Such monsters are far from a modern invention either, and sightings have been recorded and invented since time immemorial. Homer's 8th century BCE hero Odysseus encountered Scylla - a six-headed sea monster - and Charybdis, a ship-eating whirlpool, and was forced to choose which of the two he would face on passing through the Strait of Messina.

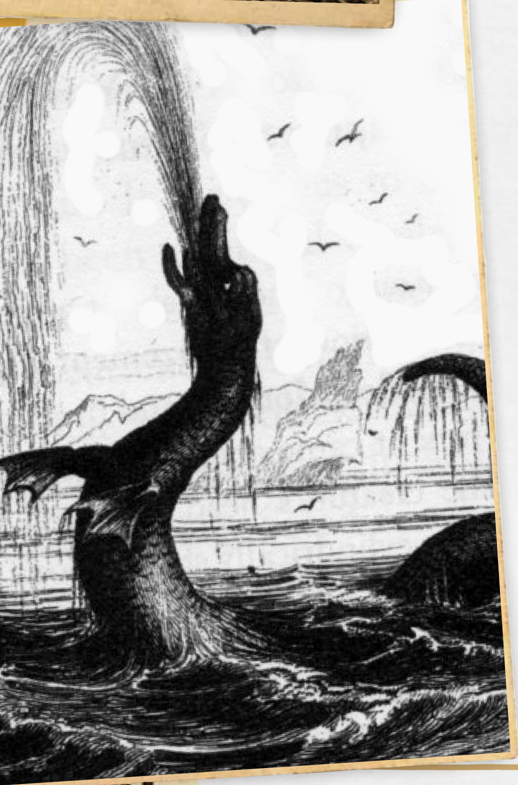
The Kraken is another familiar name, reported in the seas off Greenland and Norway, and is one of the largest of folklore's giant sea-dwelling monsters. Descriptions of this beast have shifted over time; initially closer to a whale-like creature, from the 18th century onwards descriptions of the Kraken saw it increasingly likened to the many-tentacled squid-like creature we recognise today. Erik Pontoppidan was the first to describe its grasping tentacles.

The Norse Jormungandr, or Midgard Serpent, is famous in Scandinavian mythology as the enemy of Thor. Encircling the world, when it releases its tail, Ragnarok - the destruction and rebirth of the world - will begin.

Much less common to find is the sea monster that brings prosperity rather than destruction. A Tlingit legend tells of Gunakedeit, a monster that is part-wolf, part-whale that, in some versions of the story, helped those starving in an Alaskan village. The creature is actually said to be a man who shifts into monster form.

There are several more mundane explanations for the many sea monster sightings throughout history. Typhoons, hurricanes and other natural phenomena could have played their part in the creation of tales of monster-caused damage. Remnants from the age of dinosaurs, such as descendants of plesiosaurs or icthyosaurs, could also have spurred stories. From sea kelp or flotsam floating on the water to misidentification of squid and whales, these can all, say sceptics, account for the majority of supposed monsters. This has failed to dampen enthusiasm for these monsters of the deep, and sightings continue today. In fiction, the titular Moby Dick is perhaps one of the most well known sea monsters, with HP Lovecraft's fictional Cthulhu inspiring popular imagination up to the present day.

> "These denizens of the deep can cause destruction and chaos"



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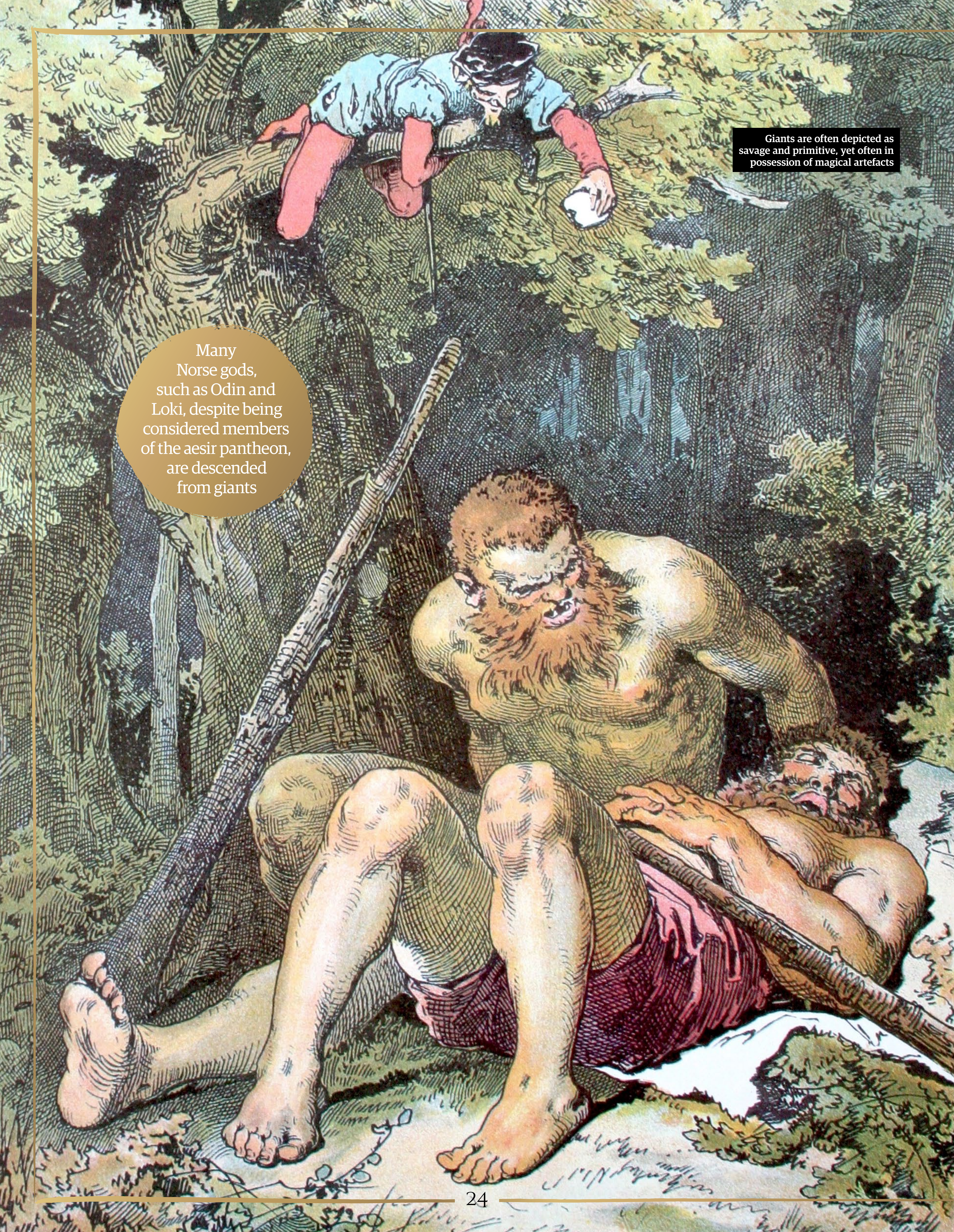


Giants are often depicted as savage and primitive, yet often in possession of magical artefacts

Many Norse gods, such as Odin and Loki, despite being considered members of the aesir pantheon, are descended from giants

GIANTS

Big in the folklore of a wide range of cultures, giants often represent fierce, even human-eating foes

Written by Willow Winsham

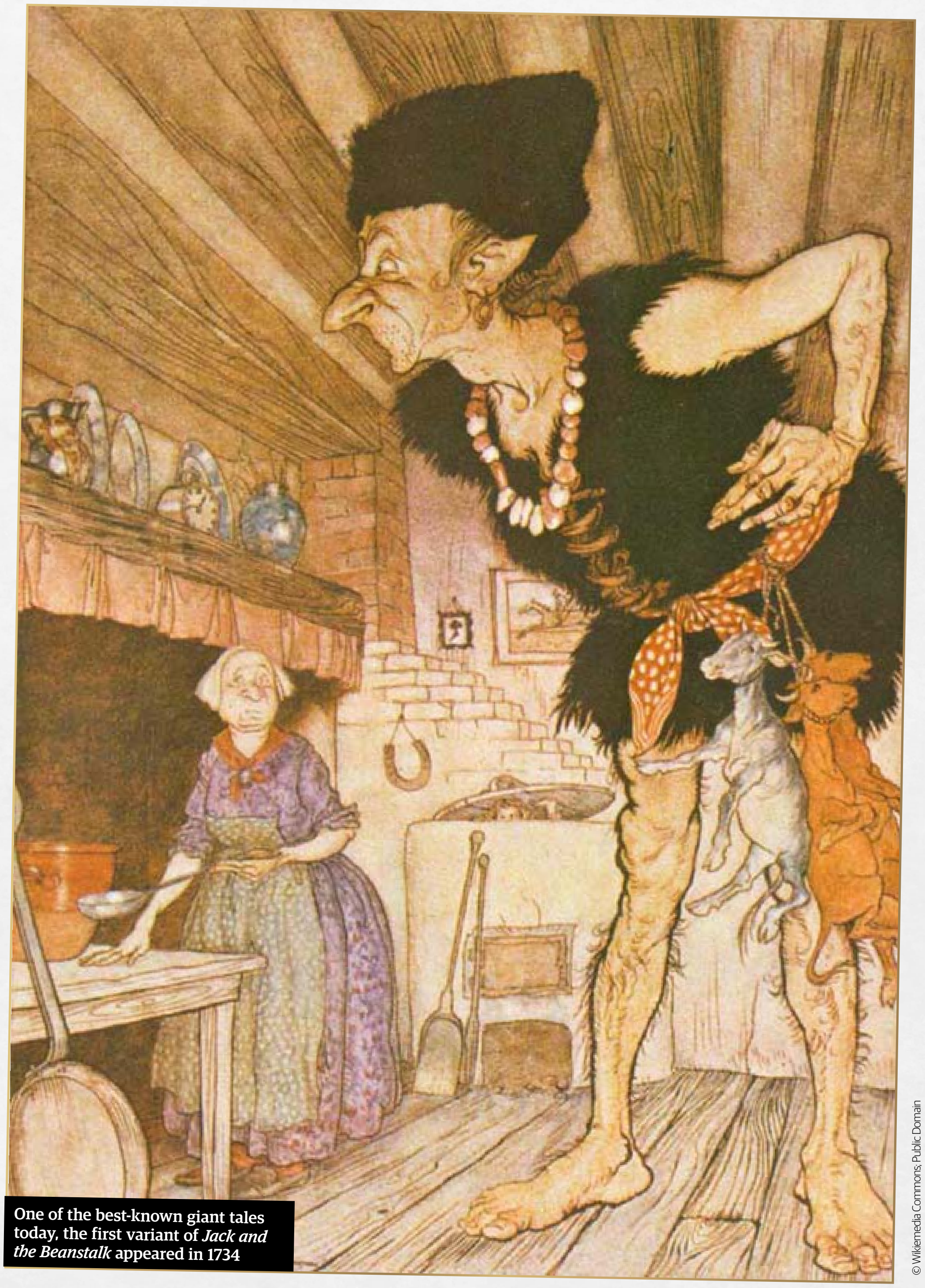
Of human form, with strength far greater than any mortal could hope for, the giants of folklore and fable appear in legends from across the world. In fairytales, especially more modern adaptations, giants are often depicted as of low intelligence; their large, lumbering physical nature mirrored in their intellectual capacities. This is made up for a hundredfold in their strength, however, and giants have not always been as easily tricked as they are today.

Often at loggerheads with the gods of various cultures, giants owe their name to the Gigantes of Greek myth, and the word 'giant' first entered English usage in 1297.

Giants are often held responsible for prominent features in the landscape. Baltic legend tells of Lithuanian Neringa, a beautiful giantess who, after rejecting a dragon suitor, lay down a strip of sand to keep him away and thus created the Neringa Peninsula. In Greek mythology, giants buried deep within the earth were said to be the cause of volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. Rocky masses or large craters are often said to be from giants throwing boulders at humans or each other. One among many worldwide, Benarty Hill in Scotland is said to be a slumbering giant. Others include Northern Ireland's Mourne Mountains and Orkney's Old Man of Hoy.

According to Norse mythology, the existence of the world was owed to Ymir, one of the largest of all giants ever to exist; the world itself was believed to be made from his dismembered flesh after he was torn into pieces when he was slain.

A departure from the larger giants of folklore comes in the form of the Norse jötnar. They were often diminutive as far as giants go, being of human stature, and variously either of exquisite beauty or terrifyingly ugly, and very strong. The name jötnar (singular, jötunn) relates to Old English 'eoten' and may have origins meaning man-eater or glutton. They include the fire, mountain, and frost giants. These beings were to be found in Jötunheimr, one of the Nine Worlds. Rather than a diet of human flesh, the jötnar existed on fish from the waters and animals that roamed the forests or mountain wildernesses. The jötnar are believed to play a part in Ragnarok, the legendary Norse apocalypse.



One of the best-known giant tales today, the first variant of *Jack and the Beanstalk* appeared in 1734

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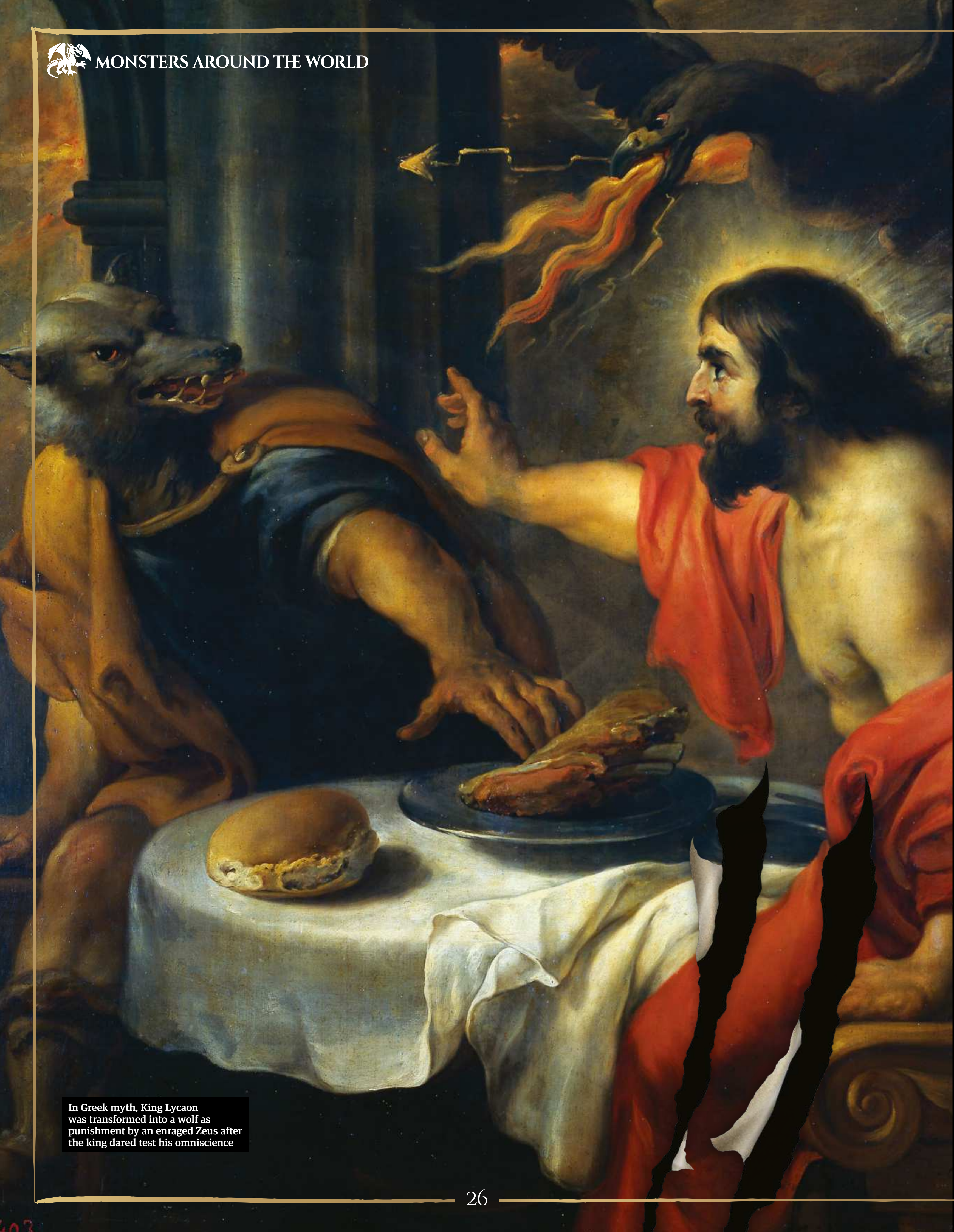
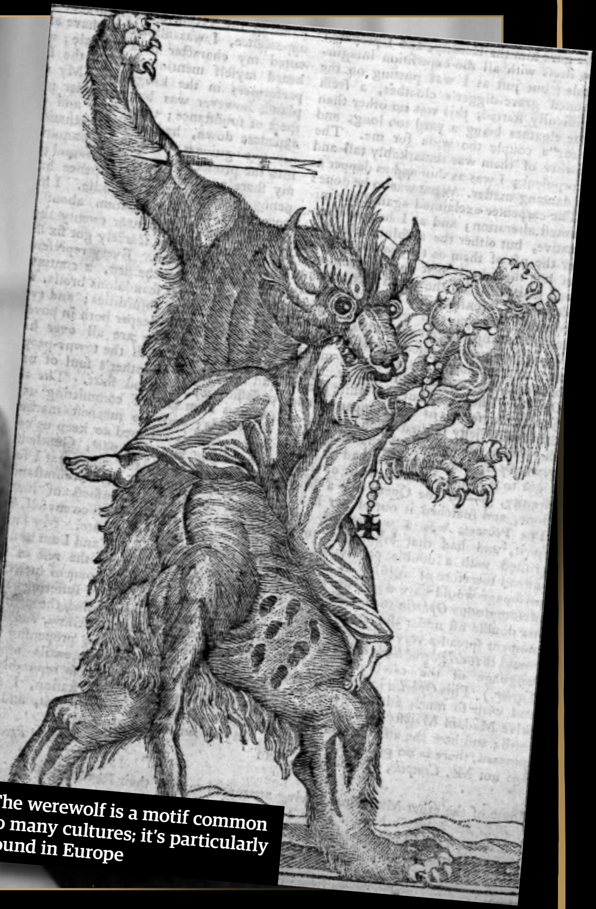


In Greek myth, King Lycaon was transformed into a wolf as punishment by an enraged Zeus after the king dared test his omniscience

WEREWOLVES

The werewolf is one of the oldest types of monster, tracing its history at least as far as the myths of ancient Greece

Modern werewolves owe much to their depictions in print and on screen. *Werewolf of London* was the first mainstream werewolf movie, in 1935



The werewolf is a motif common to many cultures; it's particularly found in Europe

The concept of men who could change into wolves is an ancient one, with Roman writers Virgil, Pliny the Elder, and Ovid mentioning them in their writings. Greek Herodotus likewise recorded details of a tribe that annually shifted into wolves – their transformation lasted for a period of days.

Curved fingernails, brows that met in the middle, and an appetite for fresh corpses were all trademark signs of lycanthropic tendencies. There were several ways an individual could become a werewolf. Being bitten by another werewolf under a Full Moon is perhaps the best known. The recitation of certain words, stripping naked before donning a wolfskin belt, being cursed or drinking rainwater from a werewolf's footprint could also lead to an unfortunate transformation into lupine form.

Less well known than the Witch Trials, werewolf trials took place in Europe throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. Some ill-fated suspects were condemned to life imprisonment. One historical influence on werewolf lore was the Beast of Gevauden. In 1764 this creature embarked upon a three-year reign of terror, with the final body count at over 80. It was from reports of the eventual slaying of the beast that the idea that silver bullets were fatal to werewolves was introduced.

Given the ferocity of their reputation therefore, it is surprising to learn that not all werewolves are out for blood. The Irish Faoladh, a person who shifts into a wolf, is benevolent, and is better known to protect rather than attack. The Scottish wulver is another, gentle, variant. Not able to shape shift, the wulver from the Shetland Isles had instead the head of a wolf, but the body of a man. Preferring their own company, they were pleasant when they came into contact with people, and were known to help those who had lost their way or leave freshly caught fish for the poor. Thankfully being a werewolf was not irreversible, and cures exist in varying degrees of harshness. Exorcism was a popular method, as was an antidote of wolfsbane, or piercing the hands of the afflicted with nails. Addressing the wolf by its name three times was enough in some areas of Germany, whereas in Denmark, one simply had to give the werewolf a good telling off.

There have been various attempts to ground the legend in fact. Tales of lycanthropy have been explained as sufferers of conditions such as porphyria or rabies, or simply mass hysteria.

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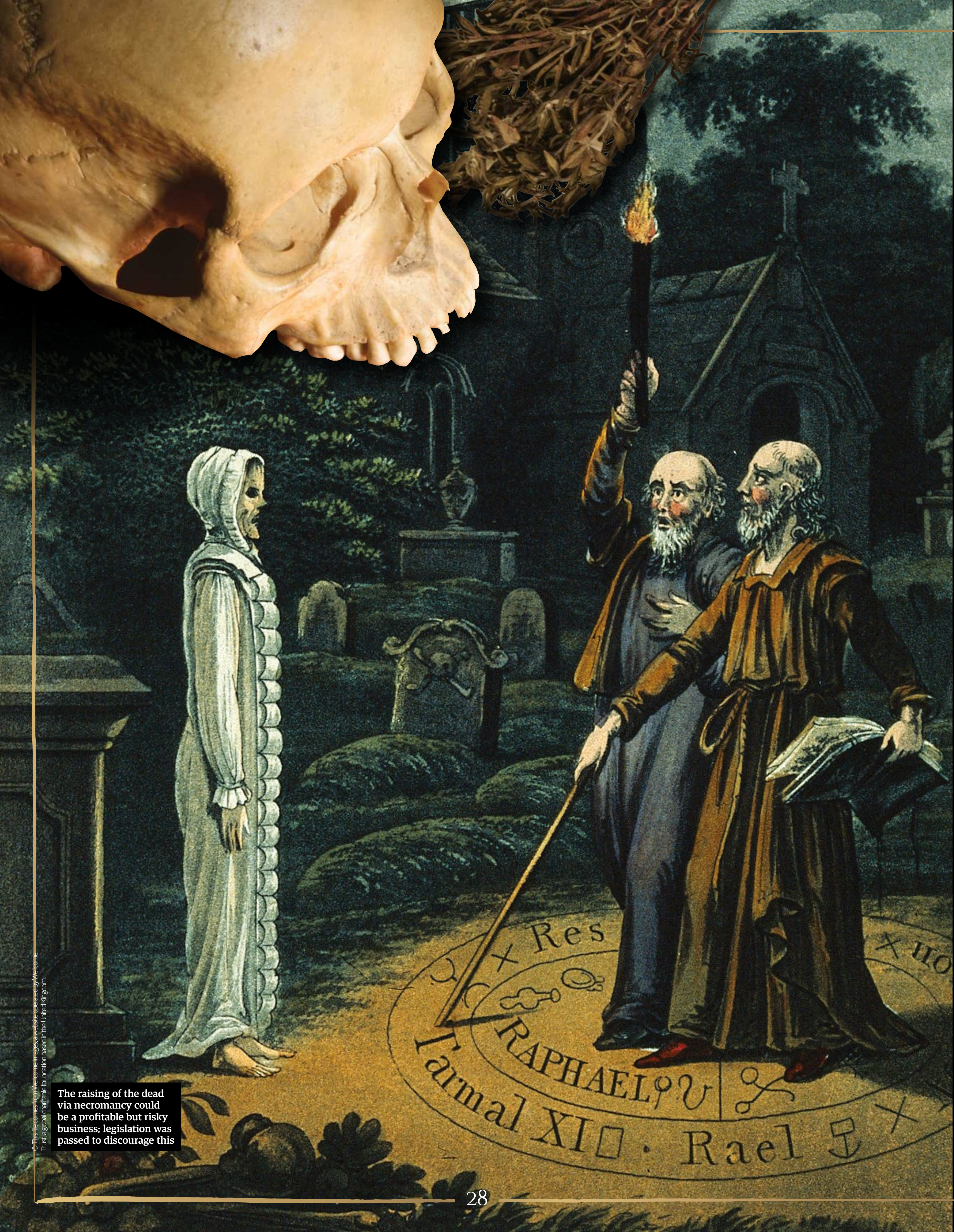

The raising of the dead via necromancy could be a profitable but risky business; legislation was passed to discourage this

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THE UNDEAD

Revenants, zombies and ghosts are traditionally thought to wander after death in cultures worldwide

Written by Willow Winsham

Belief in the survival of the human soul after death, by logical extension, has given rise to a long and enduring belief that the dead, in various forms, can return to interact with the living. Either through their own power, in order to complete unfinished business, or at the behest of another, the restless undead, and how to deal with them, is a motif that occurs in the folklore of nearly all religions and cultures.

Incorporeal ghosts often return with a message or lesson for the living. Some speak to those who encounter them, while others are mute, and while some ghosts are obvious from the outset, others appear solid until a sign, such as lack of footprints, or vanishing into thin air, betrays them. Some ghosts are benign, while others are reported to be malevolent in nature. Often, a ghost returns to put right a matter left unfinished at the time of their death. With love believed to endure even beyond the grave, there are many tales of ghostly lovers returning to their love left behind, or the ghosts of those who have died in a lovers' pact. Many famous ghosts, such as various grey, green, or white ladies, are associated with specific locations, as are ghostly nuns, ill-fated monarchs and phantom armies.

A revenant – from the French for 'the returning', tends to describe a corpse that has been reanimated, often purposefully raised from death with the purpose of plaguing the living. In Norse mythology, there is the 'again walker' or aptgangr. The zombie, originating in Haitian folklore, is a reanimated corpse controlled by a bokor or witch; they have no will of their own. Although popular culture has frequently linked zombies with voodoo, the religion does not include them within its practices. Zombies can also appear in incorporeal form, the spirit selling for a pretty penny if captured and bottled. The word 'zombie' was first used in English in 1819, by the poet Robert Southey, in a history of Brazil.

The Norse draugr are terrible, grave-dwelling creatures. Of immense strength, they can alter their size at will, and are believed to be guarding the treasure buried with them. Vengeful and vicious, they hunt down not only those who did them wrong in life, but are also known for attacking anyone who crosses their path.

Ghouls, graveyard-dwelling demons from Arabian folklore, also have a penchant for human flesh. In some cases, a ghoul gruesomely takes the form of the most recent person it consumes. In other instances they manifest as beautiful women who lead their beguiled victims astray into the wastes in order to feed on them.

> "Some legends feature incorporeal ghosts and spirits, while others feature reanimated corpses. Both are equally terrifying"

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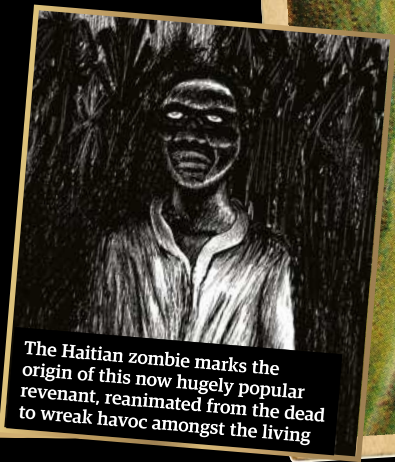
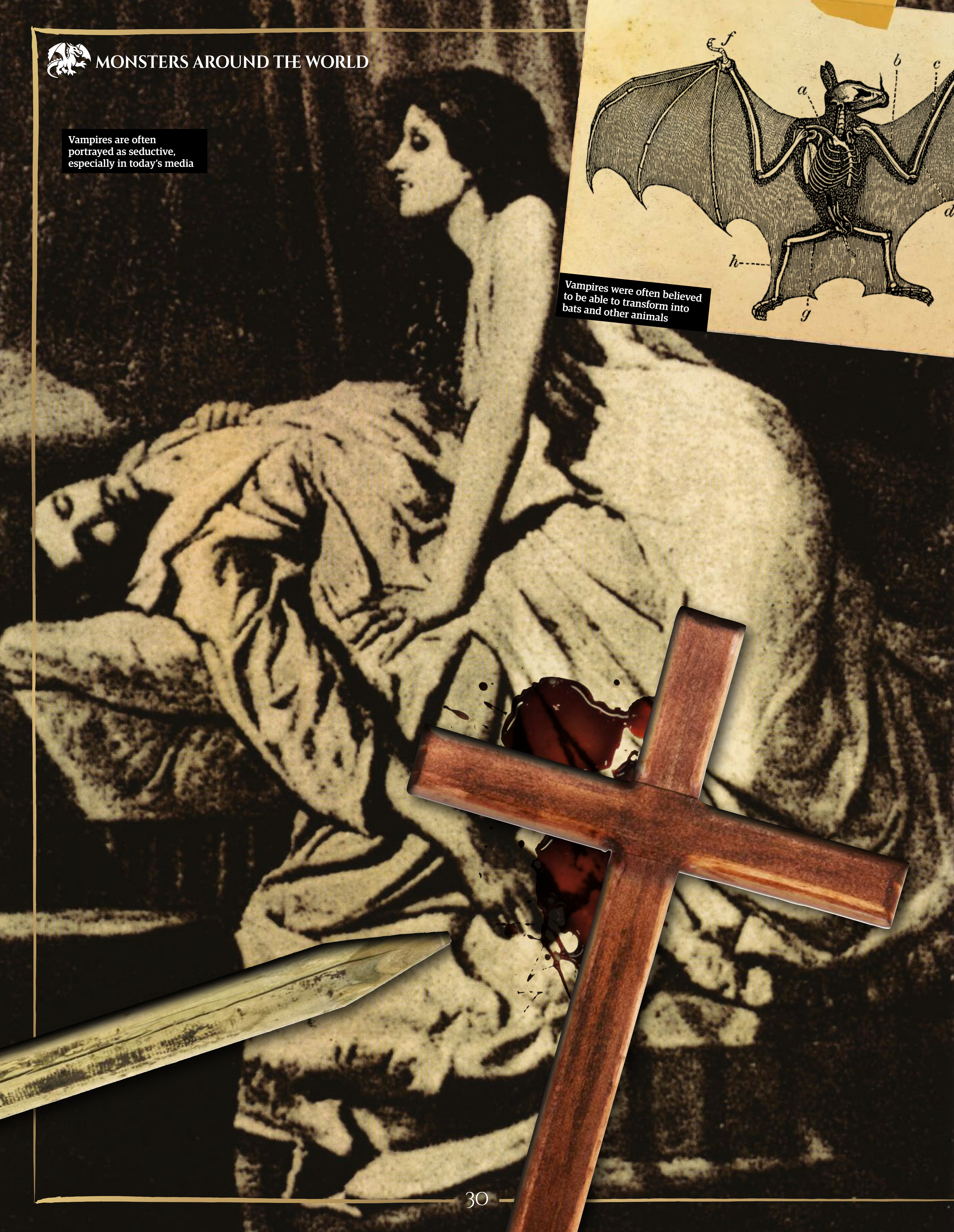
The idea that the soul or spirit lives on after death is one of the most universal beliefs across the globe



The Haitian zombie marks the origin of this now hugely popular revenant, reanimated from the dead to wreak havoc amongst the living



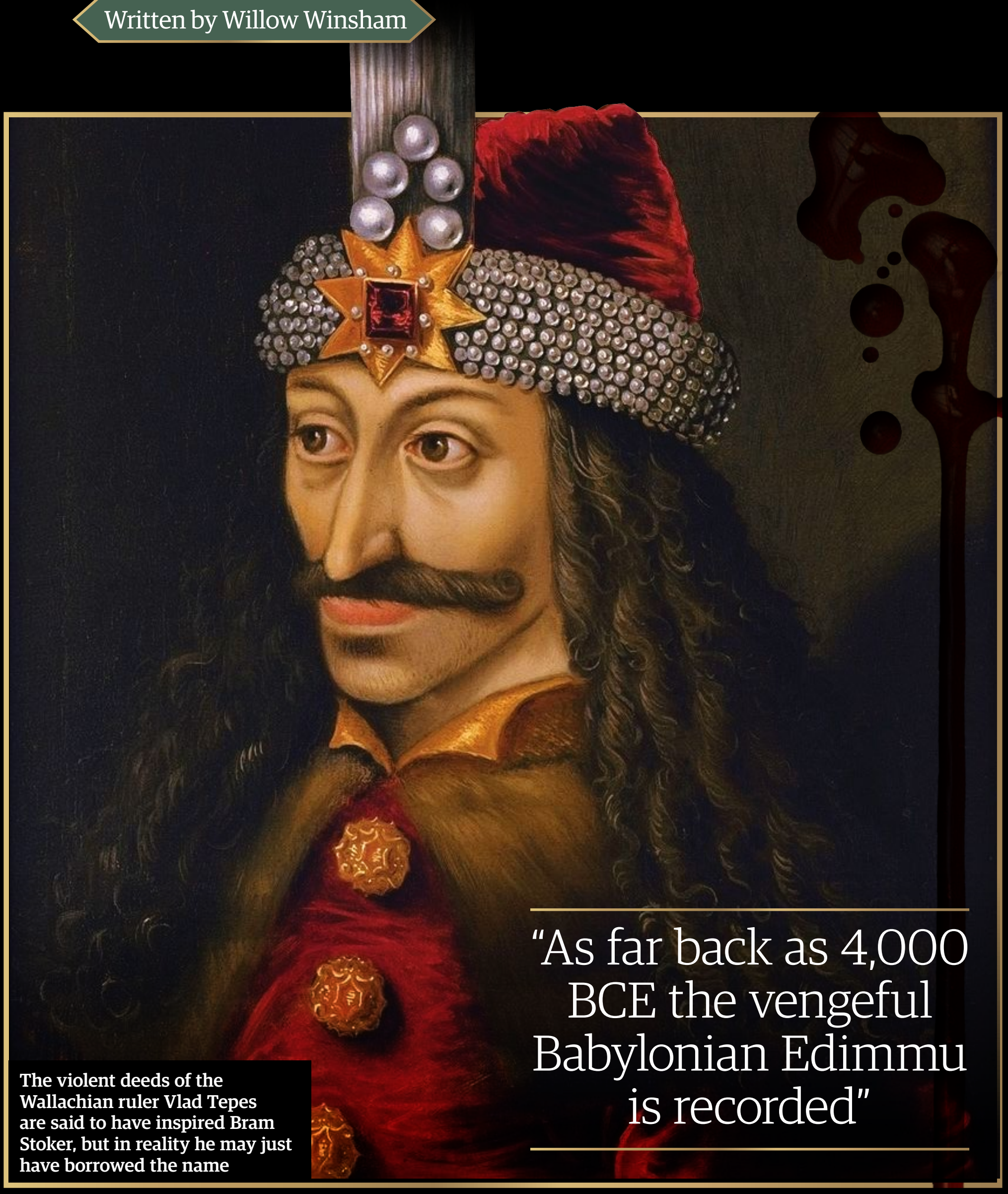
Vampires are often portrayed as seductive, especially in today's media

Vampires were often believed to be able to transform into bats and other animals

VAMPIRES

Bloodthirsty and cunning, vampires are a type of undead creature with their own unique folklore

Written by Willow Winsham



The violent deeds of the Wallachian ruler Vlad Tepes are said to have inspired Bram Stoker, but in reality he may just have borrowed the name

> "As far back as 4,000 BCE the vengeful Babylonian Edimmu is recorded"

Creatures that feed off the blood or life essence of their own kind have featured in myth and legend throughout the millennia. As with many monsters of folklore, however, the pale-skinned, charismatic, ultimately sympathetic vampire that we know today has come very far from its folkloric roots.

The original vampires were not actually bloodsuckers at all. As far back as 4,000 BCE the vengeful Babylonian Edimmu is recorded; the spirit of the recently dead that drained the life from those left behind.

This was a common belief across much of the world, and the blood-drinking vampires of modern folklore did not enter the record until the late 17th century. In Kringa, Croatia, 1672, mass panic arose after it was believed Jure Gando had returned from the dead to terrorise his neighbours. His deeds included heralding death and drinking blood. When his 16-years-dead but perfectly preserved corpse was disinterred, he was laid to rest by decapitation. Panics of a similar nature took place across Europe throughout the 18th century, and the word 'vampire' first came into English usage in 1734.

Traditional vampires shared several traits, including a ruddy, even bloated, complexion, the ability to shape shift, an aversion to holy ground or consecrated items, and the hounding of the living. Becoming a vampire could be caused by a vampire bite, while victims of suicide, witches, or even, in Slavic folklore, a corpse that an animal has jumped over, were all prone to joining the ranks of the undead.

The two most common ways to slay a vampire and prevent it from rising again were decapitation, or staking with a stake made from oak, aspen or ash. You could guard against vampirism by making sure to bury the dead upside down. Despite popular belief, vampires were only weakened, not killed, by exposure to sunlight, and many historical vampires cast both shadows and reflections. The addition of fanged canine teeth is also a modern invention. In earlier traditions, deaths from tuberculosis were blamed on the dead draining the life from their family members from beyond the grave in the late 19th century New England Vampire Panic.

John Polidori brought the modern idea of the vampire into Western lore with his 1819 *The Vampyre*, and, followed by Stoker's *Dracula*, the two paved the way for the deep fascination that remains with us today.

Scared of attracting the attention of a vampire? Just make sure to scatter sand or poppy seeds nearby – the vampire will be compelled to count every single spilled grain or seed, leaving you safe and sound!

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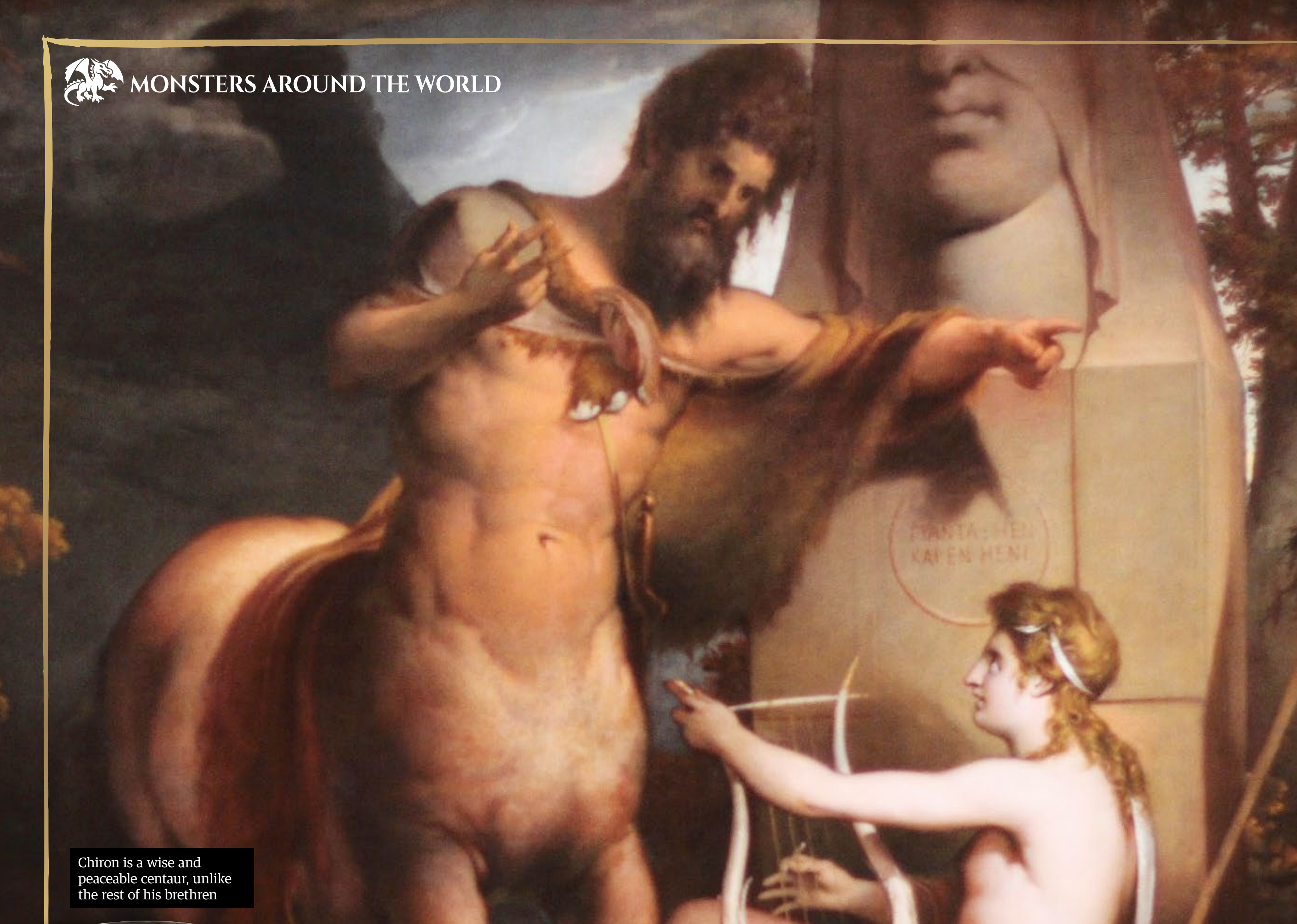
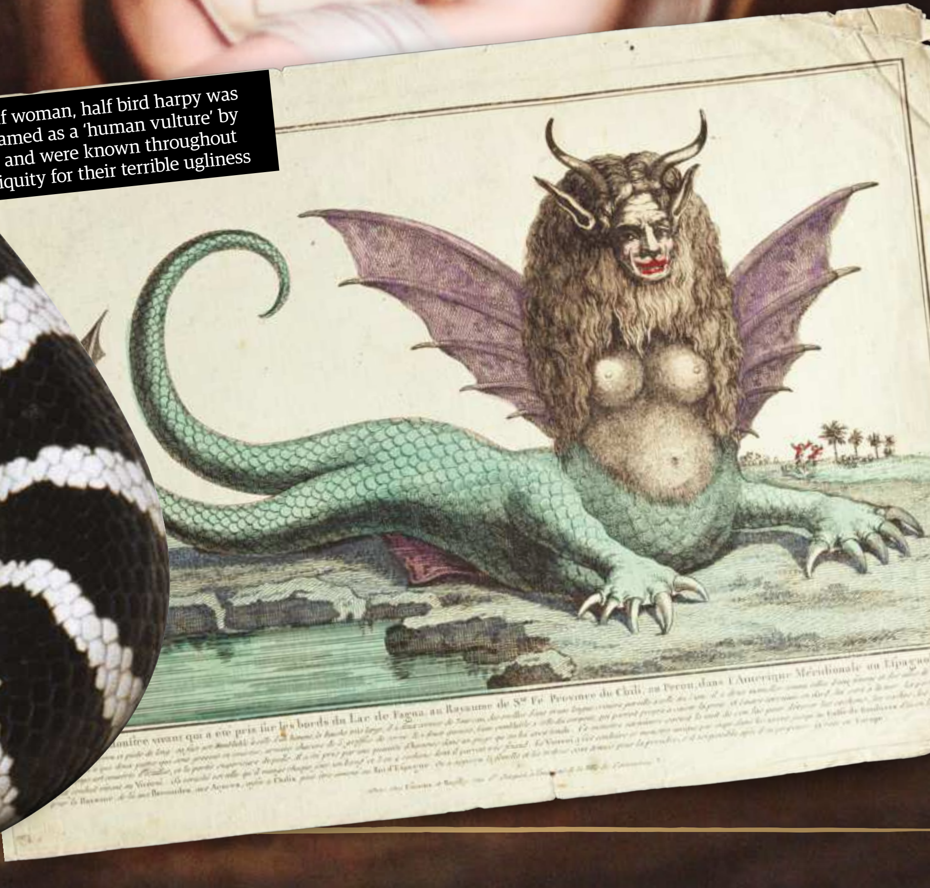


Chiron is a wise and peaceable centaur, unlike the rest of his brethren

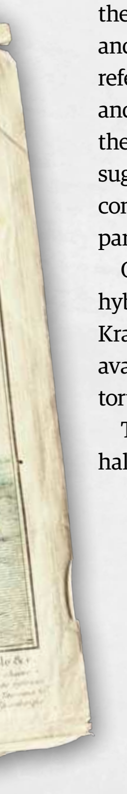


The half woman, half bird harpy was aptly named as a 'human vulture' by Ovid, and were known throughout antiquity for their terrible ugliness

HYBRIDS

Fantastic crossbreeds of ordinary animals produced fabulous beasts in the imagination of the ancient world and beyond

Written by Willow Winsham



Hybrid creatures, those composed of a combination of human or animal physical features, have frequented folklore and legends for centuries. Such hybrids are often terrible in temperament and terrifying to behold, and often a hero is faced with the task of slaying one in order to succeed in his quest or journey.

The manticores of Persian legend are a human/animal hybrid, a creature with a human head, a lion's body, and a tail covered with poisonous quills, which they shoot at those they perceive to be a threat. This creature, meaning 'man eater', passed into European folklore in 4th century BCE via Ctesias' account of India. Although he was sceptical of their actual existence, others believed, including Pliny the Elder. The manticore was said to be unbeatable, and could devour even the largest creature without leaving so much as the bones behind.

Another part-human, part-animal creature is the centaur, a creature with a human upper body and the lower body of a horse. Centaurs were referenced by various authors of classical Greece, and also appear in both Roman mythology and the bestiaries of the Medieval period. One early, suggested origin of the centaur myth was the confusion of seeing man on horseback on the part of societies that did not ride.

Other combinations include human/goat hybrids such as fauns, satyrs, or the terrifying Krampus, human/fish, human/snake, and the avatar of the Hindu god Vishnu, the human/tortoise hybrid, Kurma.

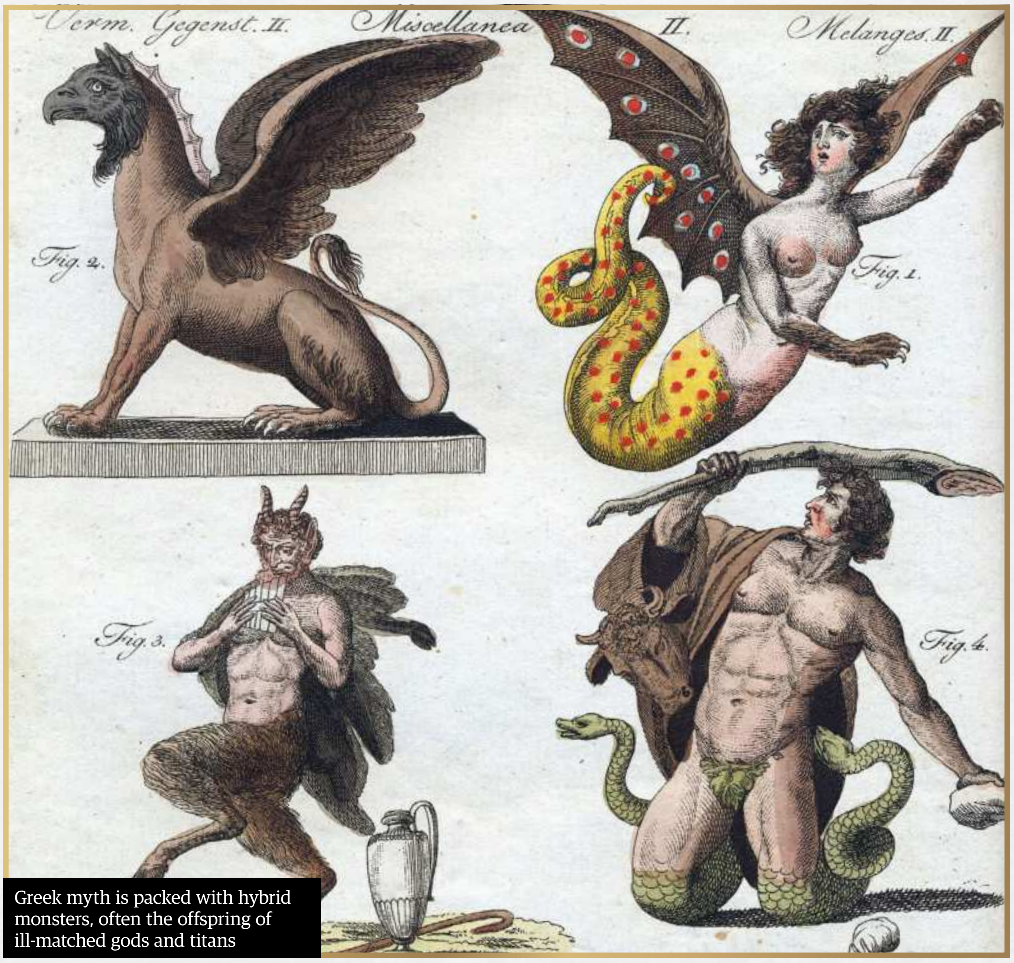
There were also hybrids with a human lower half and an animal upper body and head. These included many of the Egyptian gods such as jackal-headed Anubis and Kheph, with the head of a dung beetle. The mermaid is often conceived of as a hybrid with the head and body of a human, combined with the tail of a fish.

> "Hybrids are often terrible in temperament and terrifying to behold"

Some hybrids had no human part at all, and instead were a composite of different animal parts. The chimera of Greek mythology first recorded in Homer's *Iliad* is described as a lion at the forefront, with a goat on its back. To complete the terrifying combination, it often had a tail ending with the head of a snake. Unlike some, the chimera was almost universally considered to be female, and her appearance was said to herald disaster. This fire-breathing terror was finally defeated by the hero Bellerophon.

The cockatrice, a dragonesque creature with a rooster's head, was a legend from the 12th century. It was particularly deadly, with the ability to kill by touch, or, spectacularly, by just looking at its victim. It was equally deadly to itself; catching sight of its own reflection could cause its death.

The ordinary giraffe was believed to be a hybrid. Its alternate name, cameleopard, denotes the animals it was thought to combine.


Verm. Gegenst. II.
Miscellanea II.
Melanges. II.
Fig. 2.
Fig. 1.
Fig. 3.
Fig. 4.

Greek myth is packed with hybrid monsters, often the offspring of ill-matched gods and titans

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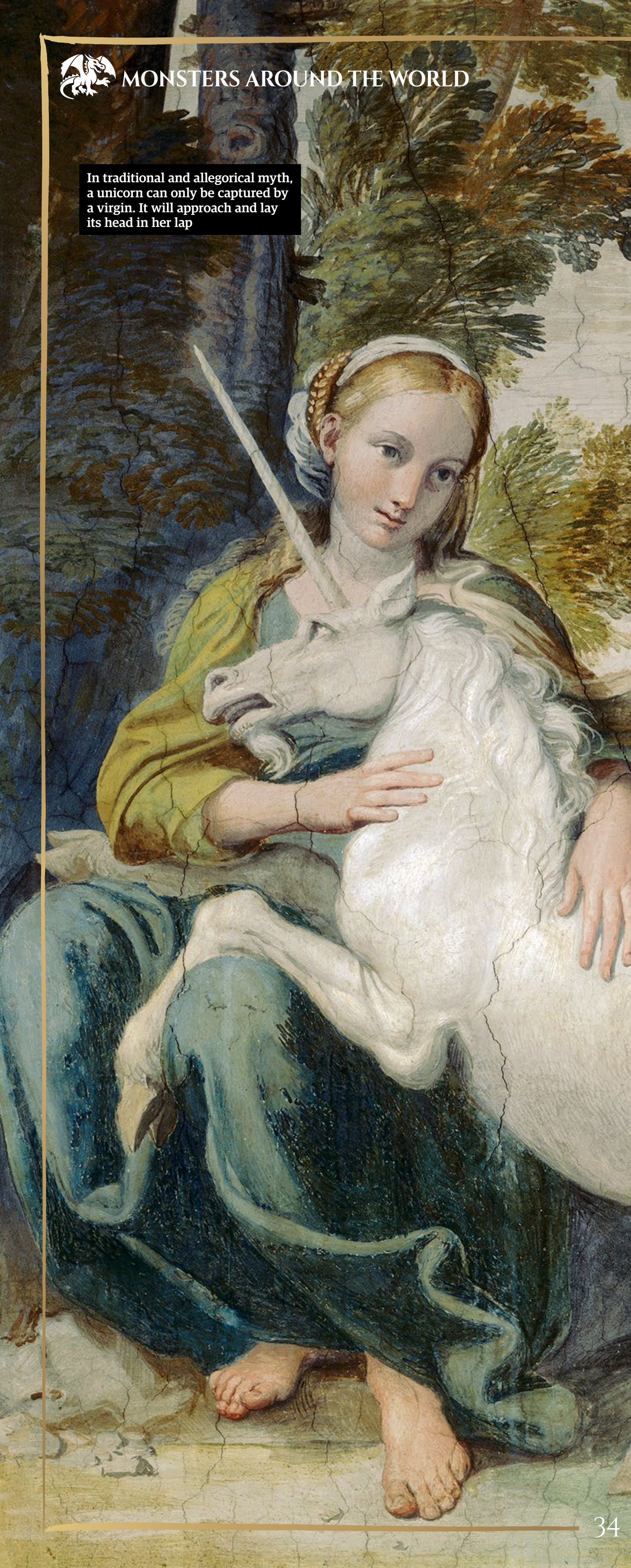
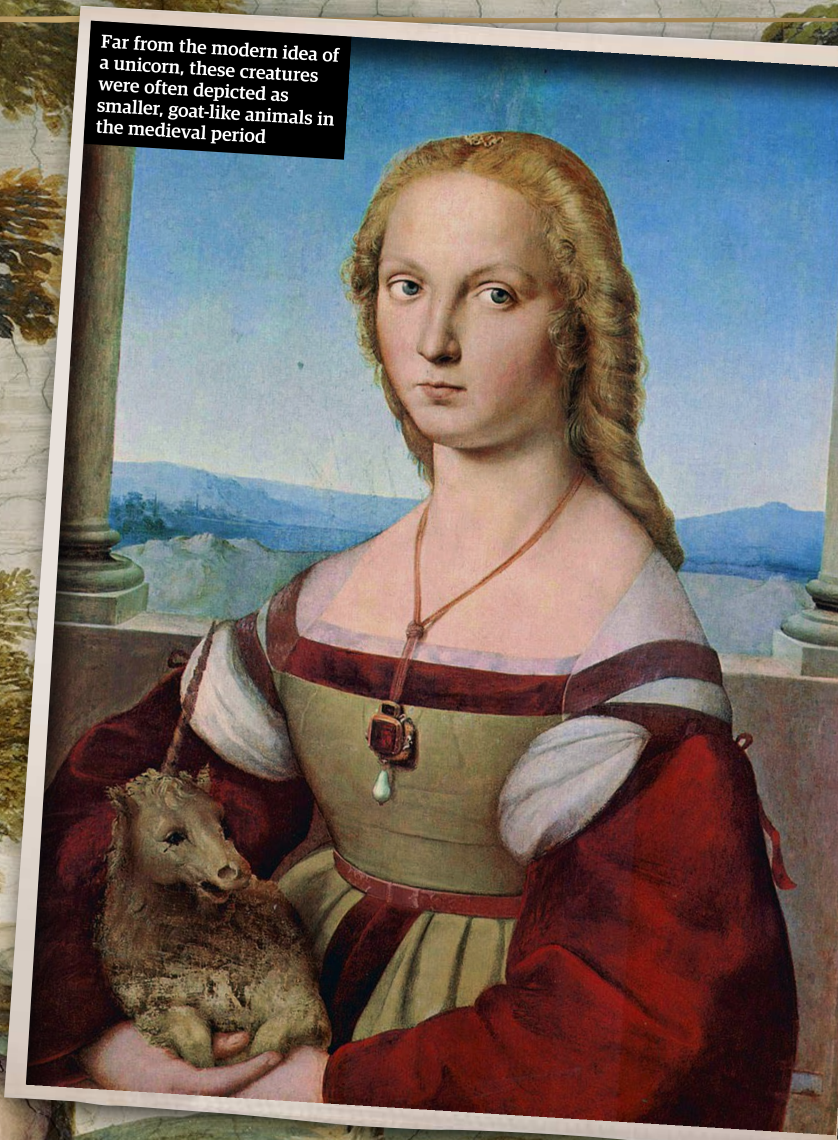


In traditional and allegorical myth, a unicorn can only be captured by a virgin. It will approach and lay its head in her lap



Far from the modern idea of a unicorn, these creatures were often depicted as smaller, goat-like animals in the medieval period

UNICORNS

Sparkling rainbow unicorns are ubiquitous today, but in previous centuries they were thought much harder to find...

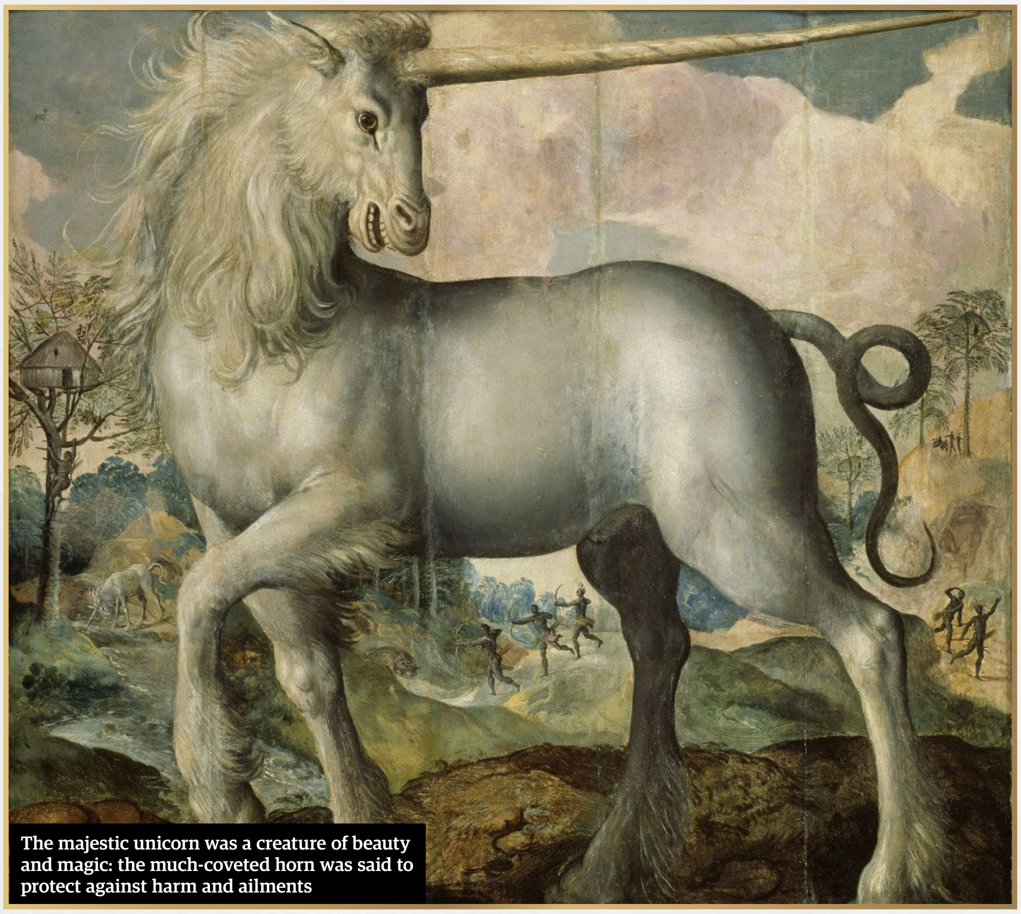
Written by Willow Winsham

The image of the unicorn as a majestic, white, golden-horned creature of beauty is a familiar staple. The advent of the unicorn into the historical record, however, involved descriptions of an animal of a rather different kind. In 398 BCE in his account of India, Greek physician Ctesias told of a type of wild ass, white in body, with a red head and dark blue eyes. The horn on its forehead was white at the base, black in the middle, and tipped with crimson. .

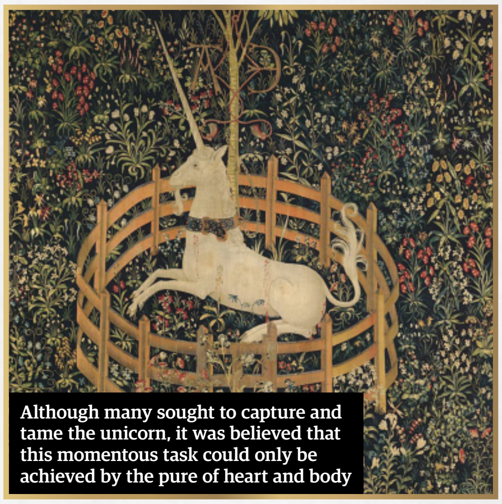
Mentioned by such prestigious names as Pliny the Younger and Julius Caesar, it has been suggested that early accounts of the unicorn were actually sightings of the Indian rhinoceros. The unicorn also featured in the 2nd century CE bestiary the *Physiologus*. It is here that the prevailing idea of a unicorn being able to be caught only by a virgin originated. The link between the unicorn and purity was soon well established, and the unicorn's popularity and its transformation into the symbol of purity and virtue in European folklore was unhindered throughout the Medieval period. Meanwhile, the horn of the mythical unicorn has long been believed to hold magical properties. Drinking from the horn was believed to prevent epilepsy, and, powdered, the horn was a protection against dangerous poisons. Due in part to this, unicorn horns could sell for a pretty penny in ages past, although such sought-after trophies were in fact narwhal tusks.

A popular motif in Christianity, representing variously the Devil, or Christ in the King James Bible, the unicorn is described as a strong, fierce beast. It was a staple of literature in the 16th century, from the plays of Shakespeare to Edmund Spenser's famous poem *The Faerie Queene*. The unicorn so captured the popular imagination that it was also the symbol of Scotland in heraldry, and remains so to this day. The creature also features in tapestry of the 16th and 17th centuries, such as two famous tapestry series, Lady with the Unicorn, and The Hunt of the Unicorn.

Situated in the Castle of Rosenborg, Copenhagen, the Throne Chair of Denmark is, according to legend, made from unicorn horns. As beguiling as that idea may be, the throne is in fact made from tusks from the more prosaic Norwegian narwhal.



The majestic unicorn was a creature of beauty and magic: the much-coveted horn was said to protect against harm and ailments



Although many sought to capture and tame the unicorn, it was believed that this momentous task could only be achieved by the pure of heart and body

> "Today the unicorn is a symbol of fantasy and rarity, describing everything from unattainable lovers to high-value start-up companies"

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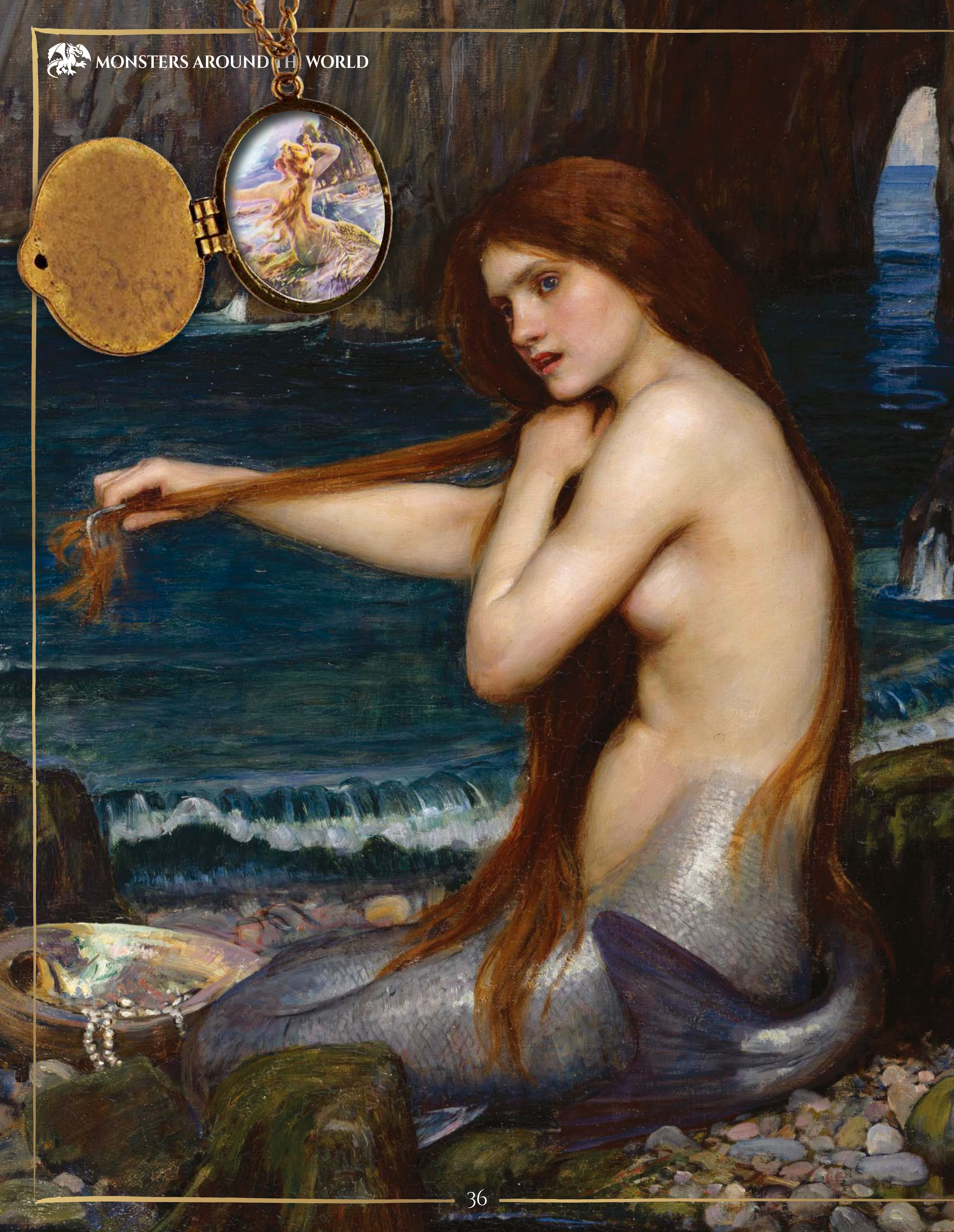


MERMAIDS

From seductive sirens and Disney princesses to a shimmering sea-inspired makeup and hair look, the beauty of mermaids has been inspiring us for centuries

Written by Willow Winsham

One of the most alluring creatures of folklore is the half-woman/half-fish mermaid. She is often pictured thus: elegantly perched on a rock, stunning tail idly lapping the water as she combs her golden tresses, the epitome of beauty. Tales of mermaids are frequent across the world, featuring in the folklore of Asia, Africa and Europe among others. These mermaids, however, can look very different to our modern ideas of these creatures.

The earliest mermaid on record is the goddess Atargatis. Having fallen in love with a mortal man, she found herself with child. Shamed and filled with guilt, Atargatis threw herself into the sea, killing herself. The heartbroken goddess was saved by her beauty however, and was only half transformed into a fish, her upper body remaining in her original form.

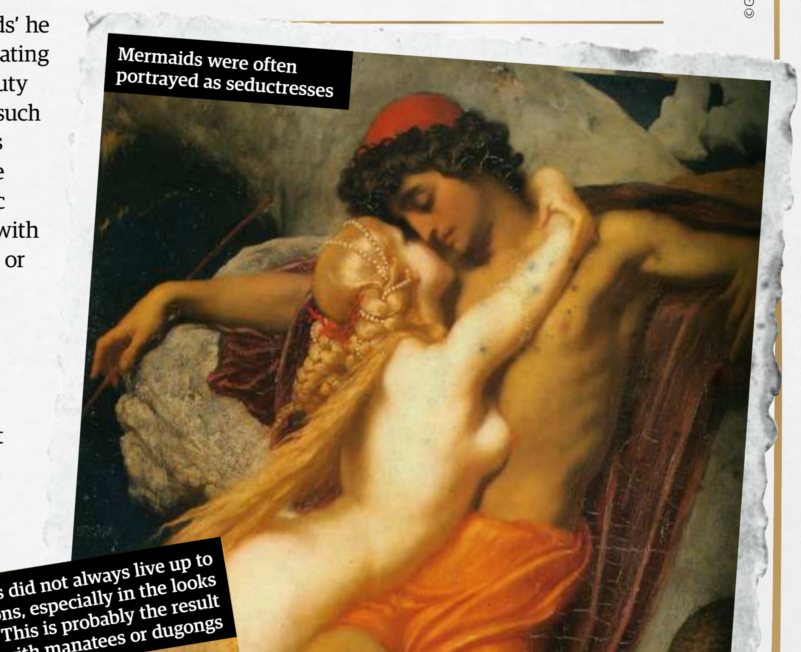
Mermaids generally receive bad press, and are held responsible for many of the tragedies that occur at sea, such as storms, shipwrecks, and the drowning of sailors. The Lara of Brazil was particularly known for tempting sailors to her undersea palace and a watery grave. Greek legend had it that Thessalonike, sister of Alexander the Great, was a mermaid. Asking sailors if her brother lived, she capsized any ship that gave the wrong answer, sparing no one in her anger.

Mermaids could however prove benevolent when it suited them, or even actively help humans who came across them. There are tales of mermaids teaching skills or passing on secrets to a person who has shown them kindness. Mermaids and their trysts with humans are common. The mermaid of Zennor fell in love with a young man at the church there, their love of singing and the beauty of their voices sparking a connection between the pair. Both vanished, the mermaid, so the story goes, taking the object of her affections back to her watery home.

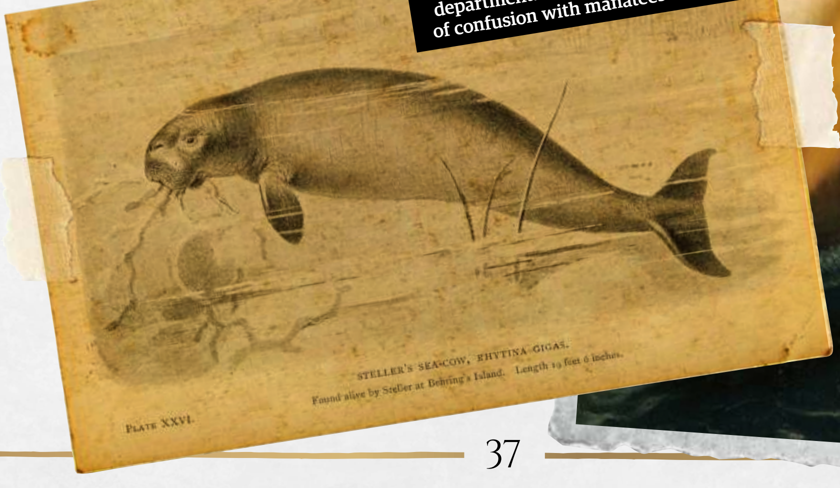
Christopher Columbus was unimpressed by the 'mermaids' he spotted on his 1493 voyage, slating them for their lack of the beauty he had been led to expect of such exotic creatures. Explanations for mermaid sightings include confusion between this exotic creature of myth and legend with the more mundane manatees or sea cows.

The most famous mermaid of fairytale is no doubt that of Hans Christian Andersen's story of *The Little Mermaid*. Love of a mortal man brought her downfall, though she was redeemed due to the selflessness of her sacrifice.

> "There are tales of mermaids teaching skills or passing on secrets"



Mermaids were often portrayed as seductresses



Mermaids did not always live up to their reputations, especially in the looks department. This is probably the result of confusion with manatees or dugongs

STELLER'S SEA-COW, RHYTINA GIGAS.
Found alive by Steller at Behring's Island. Length 19 feet 6 inches.
PLATE XXVI.

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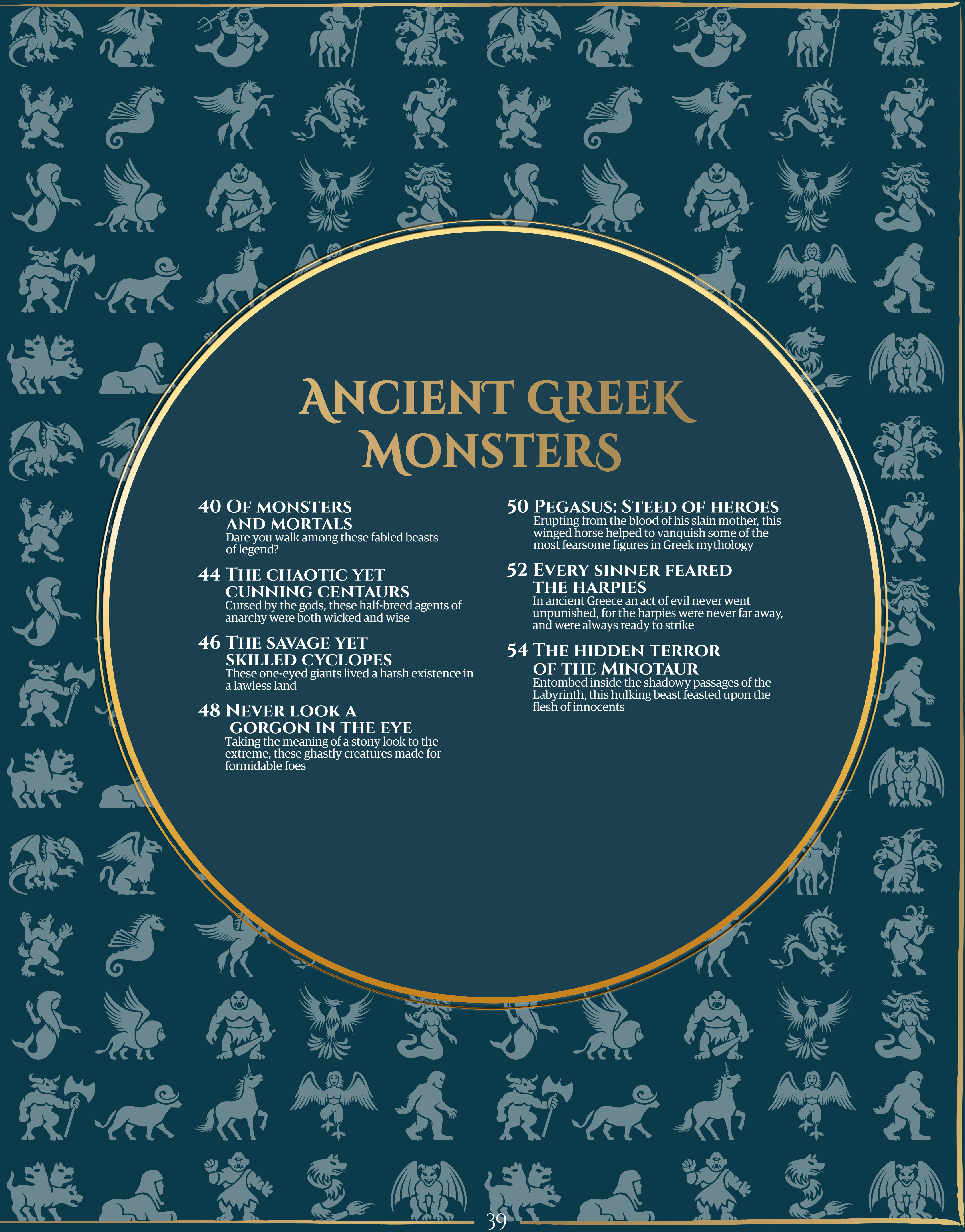


ANCIENT GREEK MONSTERS

40 Of monsters and mortals
Dare you walk among these fabled beasts of legend?

44 The chaotic yet cunning centaurs
Cursed by the gods, these half-breed agents of anarchy were both wicked and wise

46 The savage yet skilled Cyclopes
These one-eyed giants lived a harsh existence in a lawless land

48 Never look a gorgon in the eye
Taking the meaning of a stony look to the extreme, these ghastly creatures made for formidable foes

50 Pegasus: Steed of heroes
Erupting from the blood of his slain mother, this winged horse helped to vanquish some of the most fearsome figures in Greek mythology

52 Every sinner feared the harpies
In ancient Greece an act of evil never went unpunished, for the harpies were never far away, and were always ready to strike

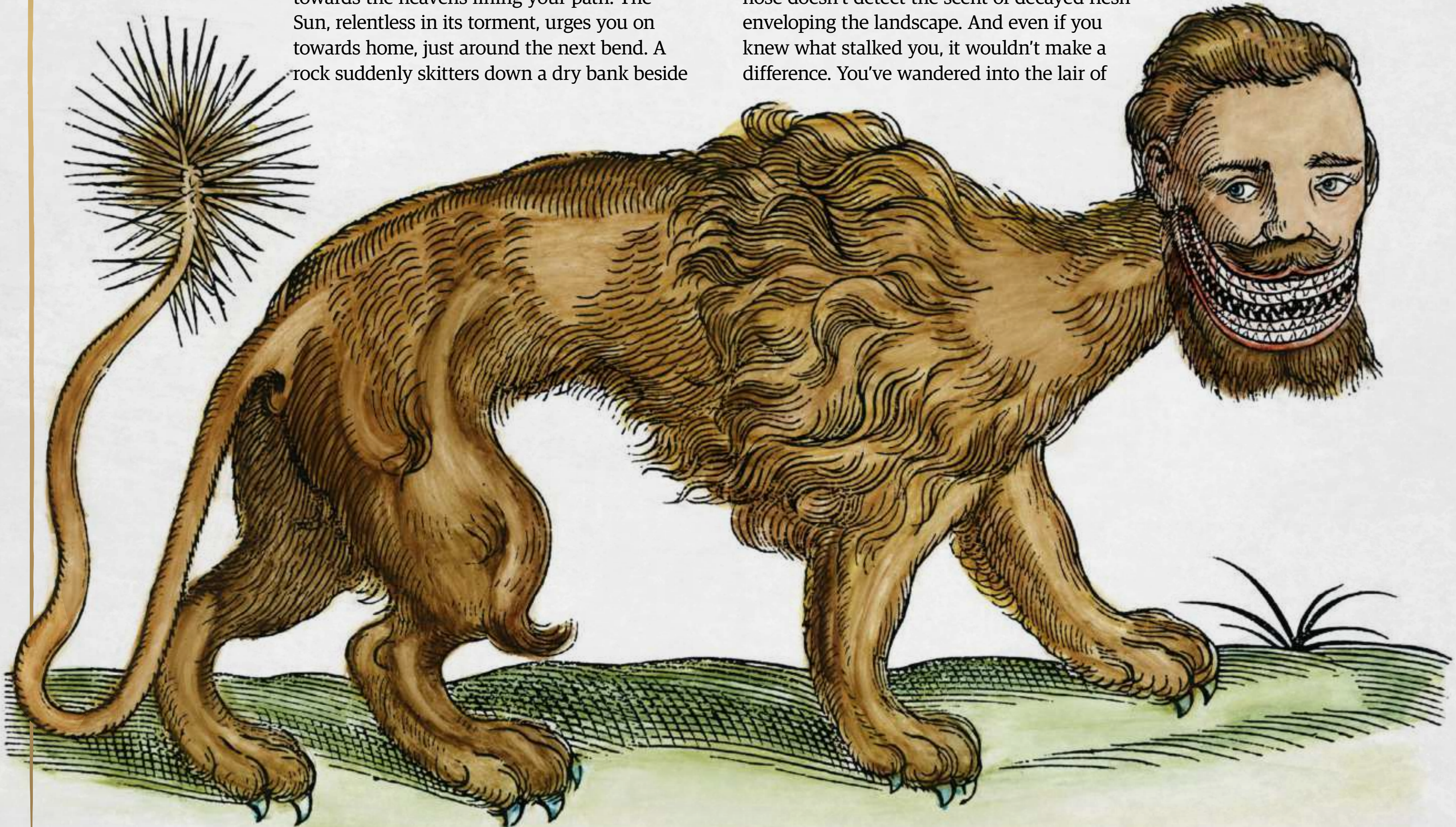
54 The hidden terror of the Minotaur
Entombed inside the shadowy passages of the Labyrinth, this hulking beast feasted upon the flesh of innocents

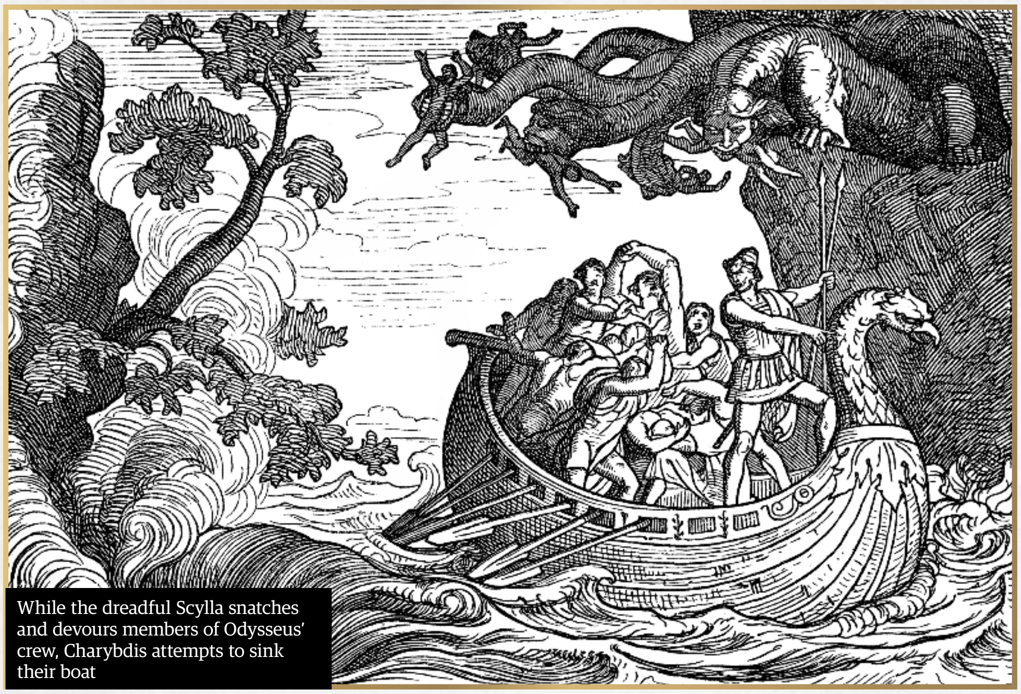
OF MONSTERS AND MORTALS

No civilisation has gifted the world such a wide and terrifying range of mythical creatures as ancient Greece. From titans and tricksters to hideous hybrids and ravenous man-eaters, dare you walk among these fabled beasts of legend?

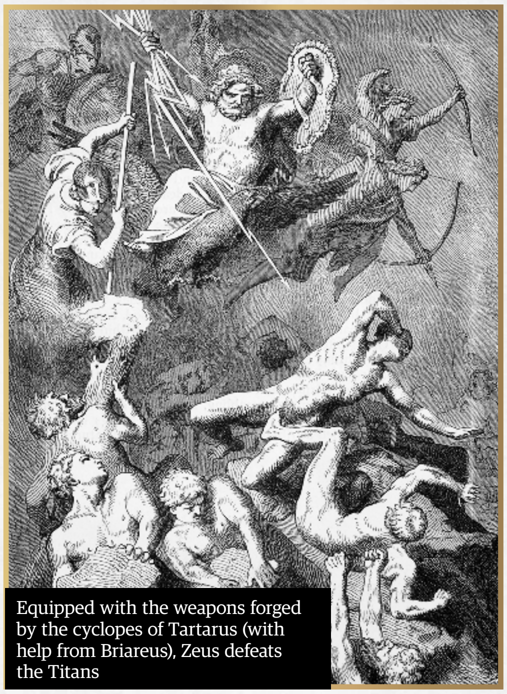
Written by Charles Ginger

Stones worn down to fragments by howling winds crunch beneath your sandals as you venture deeper into the valley, forested slopes looming towards the heavens lining your path. The Sun, relentless in its torment, urges you on towards home, just around the next bend. A rock suddenly skitters down a dry bank beside you, then another. Gazing up, all you can see are the outlines of trees against the hills. But then you're a mere mortal. Your eyes don't notice the predator watching your every movement. Your nose doesn't detect the scent of decayed flesh enveloping the landscape. And even if you knew what stalked you, it wouldn't make a difference. You've wandered into the lair of





While the dreadful Scylla snatches and devours members of Odysseus' crew, Charybdis attempts to sink their boat



Equipped with the weapons forged by the cyclopes of Tartarus (with help from Briareus), Zeus defeats the Titans

a creature more deadly, more powerful than you could ever imagine. Welcome to a world of titans.

Assuming that you make it that far, in the following pages you will encounter famous beasts such as Pegasus, the Minotaur and Medusa, legendary beings who will forever occupy a lofty perch in the annals of Greek mythology. But before you meet them (and many others) you will have to complete the Herculean task of safely navigating the many dangers lying in wait on the next page and beyond. Let's hope the gods are smiling upon you.

MANTICORES

Similar in appearance to Azhi Dahaka (a Persian creature of myth), the manticore ('man-eater') is without doubt one of the most terrifying monsters to prowl the histories of old. With the head of a bearded man, the body of a lion and the tail of a scorpion (equipped with paralysing barbs that automatically regenerate), this horrifying hybrid lured its prey toward it by hiding in long grass, thereby only revealing the seemingly benign presence of a man. Unsuspecting victims would approach only to be leapt upon and torn to pieces.

With an impenetrable hide, rows of dagger-like teeth, ferocious claws and the speed and strength to outmatch any foe (except for an elephant according to most sources), stumbling across a manticore was a death sentence, and in both Persia and Greece missing people were often written off as having fallen prey to this invincible killer. Only by finding a manticore as a cub and stamping on its tail (thereby retarding the growth of its most lethal weapon) could people hope to counter this unstoppable monster.

So convinced were people of this creature's existence that Pliny the Elder included it in *Naturalis Historia* alongside animals that we know today do in fact exist. There is even an account by Ctesias (a Greek physician who served King Artaxerxes II of Persia) that the Persian ruler was gifted a manticore, though what the king is said to have thought of his new pet is sadly not mentioned. Both Pliny's and other bestiaries (a compendium of beasts) spread the name of the manticore across Europe during the Middle Ages, inspiring varying descriptions (some say that manticores had wings) and resulting in manticores featuring in such esteemed works as Dante's *Inferno*. On a more scientific level, it's likely that the manticore was the result of an inventive description of a Caspian tiger.

THE LERNAEAN HYDRA

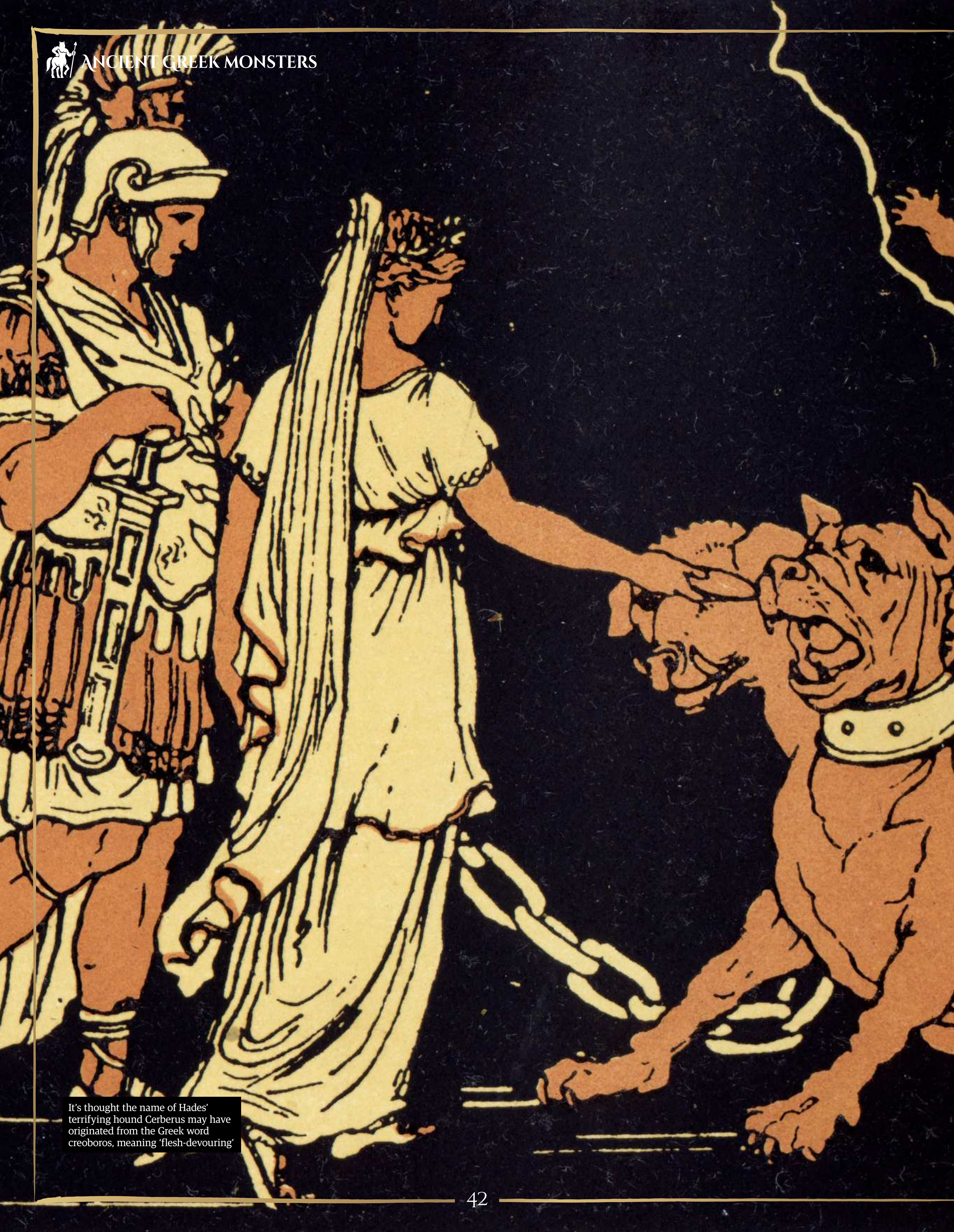
Spawned by Typhon and Echidna, this multi-headed serpent lurked in a cave beside Lake Lerna in the Peloponnese region of Greece. Reared with the sole purpose of killing Hercules, who confronted it during his Second Labour, the Hydra was perfectly suited for the role.

Credited with having between nine and 50 heads (depending on the source), the earliest depiction of the Hydra dates back to a pair of bronze brooches from around 700 BCE. According to Euripides (the legendary Greek playwright who lived from 480 to 406 BCE), for every head severed two more would sprout from the wound, making this monster almost impossible to defeat. Unfortunately for this prodigiously skulled leviathan, it was fated to fight a demi-god.

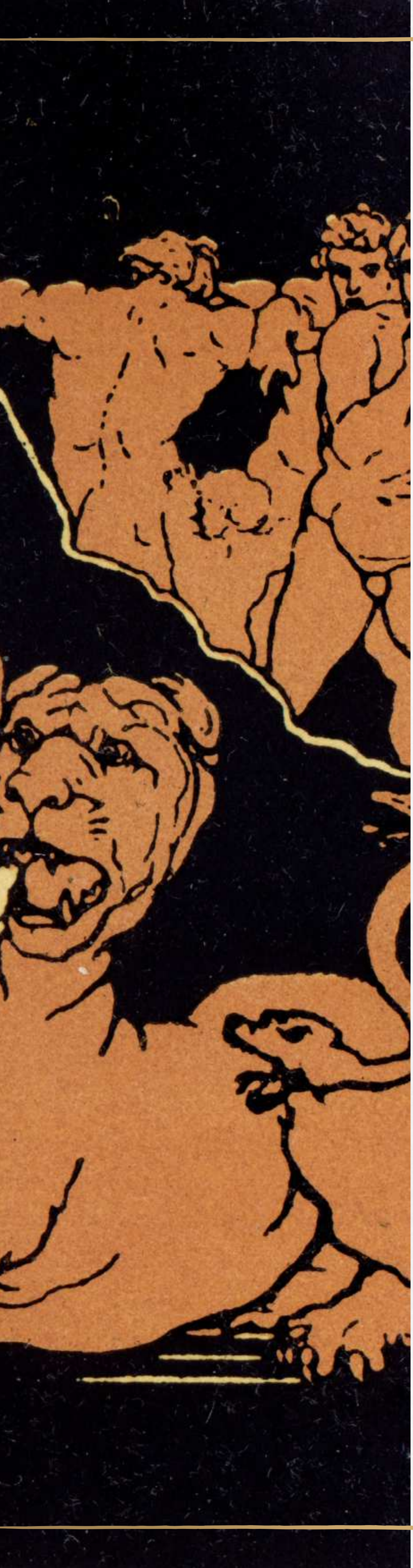
Having located the Hydra, Hercules initially struggled, slashing relentlessly only to be met with more and more snapping jaws as the monster regenerated heads. Thankfully for the son of Zeus, his crafty nephew was on hand to help. Torch in hand, Iolaus began to cauterise the wounds carved open by Hercules' sword, preventing new heads from emerging. Panicked, Hera (a goddess who would consistently try to make Hercules' Labours even more impossible) sent a large crab to harass the Hydra's assailant only to see it crushed beneath Hercules' feet. Eventually reducing the Hydra to a single crown (the only head that was immortal), Hercules brandished a golden sword given to him by Athene and dealt the final, killing blow. He then buried the indestructible head beneath a heavy stone and (fatefully as it would later prove) dipped his arrows in the dead monster's poisonous blood.

Ultimately, the Hydra would take its revenge from beyond the grave. At some point during their travels Hercules and his wife Deianeira needed to cross a fast-flowing river. Fortunately, Nessus, a muscular centaur, offered to help and proceeded to carry Deianeira across the water as Hercules struggled behind them. However, Nessus had an ulterior motive. The moment he laid Deianeria back on terra firma he tried to have sex with her. Understandably outraged, Hercules responded by shooting the centaur with an arrow dipped in the Hydra's blood.

As he bled to death, Nessus tricked Deianeira, telling her that his blood could be used as a love potion with which to win Hercules back should his eyes ever wander. With implausible gullibility, Deianeira collected some of it (the sources don't explain how). Later, when she believes that Hercules has taken a lover, Deianeira coated a fleece in Nessus' blood, hoping to secure her husband's heart. However, when Hercules donned the fleece he was wracked with agony, the serpent blood burning him from the inside out. Desperate to escape the pain, Hercules constructed a funeral pyre and immolated himself.



It's thought the name of Hades' terrifying hound Cerberus may have originated from the Greek word creoboros, meaning 'flesh-devouring'



> "According to Greek myth, between the land of the living and the caverns of the dead below, stands Cerberus"

CERBERUS

Eternal confinement in the Underworld leaves a condemned soul with a lot of time on their hands, time that could be used plotting an escape. But finding your way out of the dark passages of hell is one thing - evading the jaws of the colossus guarding the entrance to Hades' domain quite another.

According to Greek myth, between the land of the living and the caverns of the dead below, stands Cerberus, a three-headed hound tasked with preventing the dead from escaping the Underworld and stopping any living soul from entering. Gigantic in size and with snakes sprouting from its back, this canine took no prisoners, and yet not once but twice was it bettered by a foe in human form.

In a bid to rescue his wife from the Underworld, the legendary musician and poet Orpheus bewitched the slavering hound blocking the gates to hell with his unmatchable lyre playing (such were his skills he is said to have been able to move even stone with his music). Having slipped by the dog, Orpheus managed to convince Hades to release his wife only to then ignore the god's single instruction not to turn around when leaving. Orpheus inevitably did just that, condemning his wife to return to the Underworld.

The other man to take on Cerberus was Hercules, who, in his 12th and final labour, overpowered the beast and hauled it up to the land of the living. His task complete, he returned Cerberus to his deep, dark home at the entrance to the land of the dead.

SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS

Haunting opposite shores of the Strait of Messina, these twin terrors preyed on many a doomed sailor. Scylla is described as having 12 feet and six heads, each one located on the end of long, serpentine necks. Her six mouths boasted three separate rows of shark-like teeth, perfect for snatching seamen off the decks of passing vessels. If these features weren't scary enough, her loins were said to be home to the heads of several ravenous dogs.

Charybdis certainly looked less daunting at first glance, coming in the form of a whirlpool that lurked beneath the shadow of a fig tree on the opposite shore to Scylla. But as any ancient mariner knew well, a whirlpool could mean a watery grave.

Consuming and then regurgitating the waters of the Strait three times a day, Charybdis drowned countless sailors, and she almost added the famous hero Odysseus to her body count when she sent his raft swirling to the bottom of the sea. Thankfully for Odysseus, he was able to cling onto a branch and wait for his boat to return to the surface.

HECATONCHEIRES

The children of Ouranos (Uranus) and Gaia, the Hecatoncheires were three monstrous brothers who helped to change the fate of the cosmos.

Born with 100 arms and 50 heads, they were named Briareus the Vigorous, Cottus the Furious and Gyes the Big-Limbed by a doting mother who lavished them with as much love as she did her more 'god-like' children. But the giants' father could not reconcile having such hideous offspring and attempted to force them back into Gaia's womb. Writhing in agony, Gaia pleaded with Uranus to stop, but his failure to return the children from whence they came didn't spare them. Deaf to his begging wife, Uranus cast his children into the Pit of Tartarus.

Unable to move their limbs in concert or control their rage, the brothers languished in captivity until their brother Kronos intervened. Castrating his father, Kronos seized the key to the gate of the pit and liberated the giants. But he hadn't realised what he was unleashing. Having only ever heard their imploring voices, Kronos was stunned to see three lumbering giants with raging heads burst forth from the darkness. Wrestling them back into their prison, Kronos locked the gates once more. "Betrayed! We are betrayed!" yelled the many-headed brothers. Yet their fate was not to stay incarcerated for long.

Challenged by the Titans for supremacy, Zeus needed all the allies he could get. Approaching the pit, he voiced a proposition to the brothers inside: prove yourselves worthy and I will free you. His offer fell on grateful ears and eager hands, hands that the brothers had spent many long days mastering. Accepting the challenge, each brother played their part. Cottus wrestled the dragon guarding the gate to Tartarus; Gyes hurled a boulder from the entrance to the pit to the summit of Mount Olympus; and Briareus found the cyclopes living within the pit and helped them to forge the weapons needed in the war against the Titans.

Impressed by the brother's abilities, Zeus duly liberated them, and they in turn helped him to win his struggle for rule of the cosmos. Cottus and Gyes would go on to become the new guards of Tartarus, while Briareus would come to Zeus' aid once more when Poseidon attempted to overthrow him.

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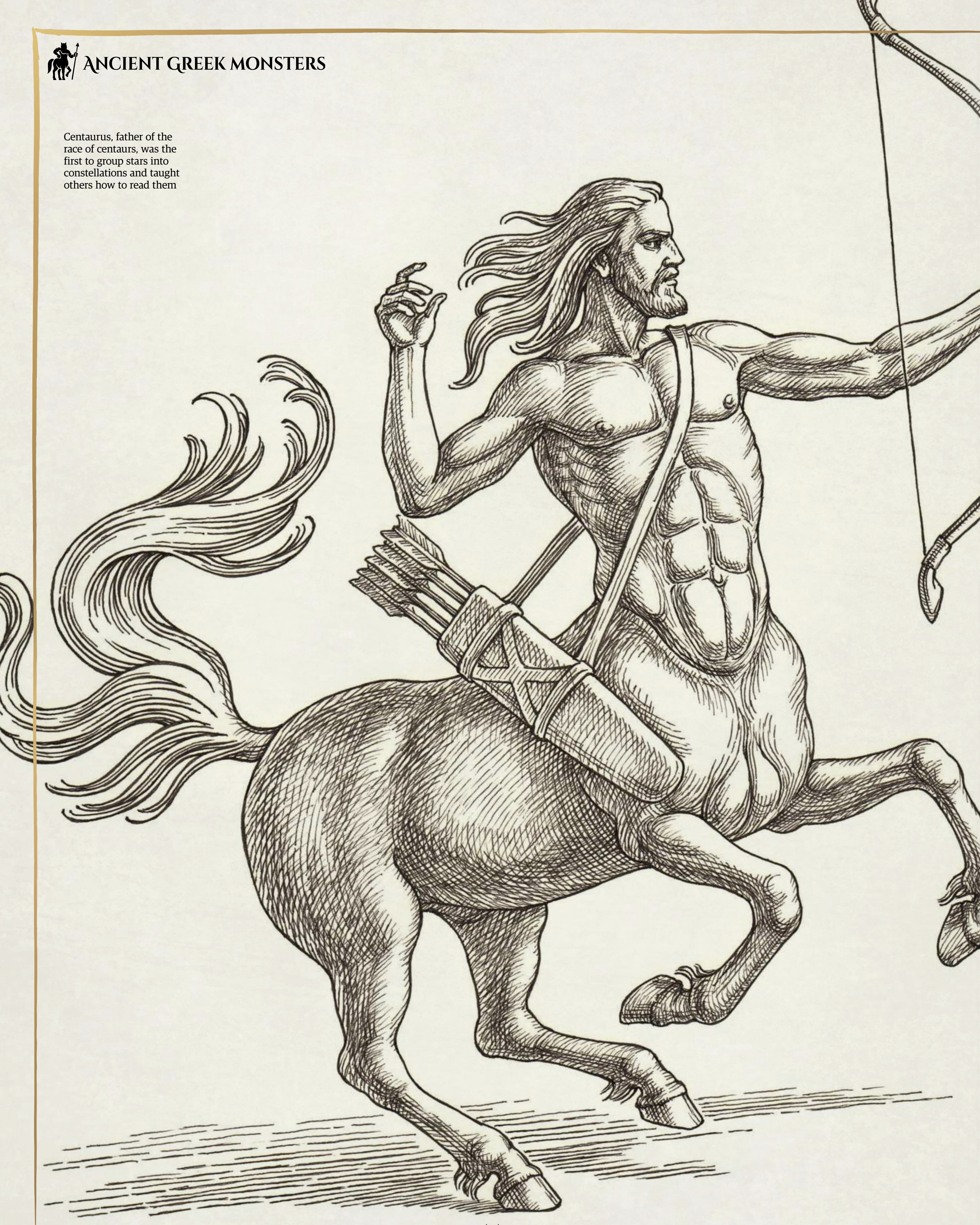
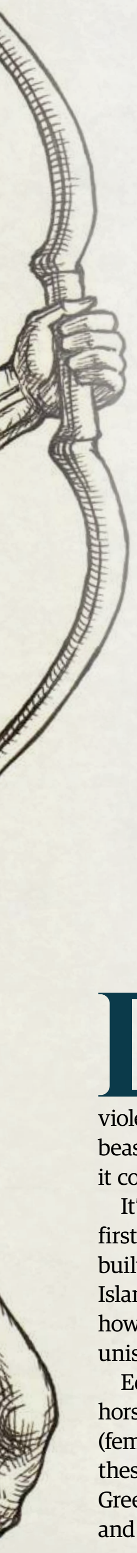
Centaurus, father of the race of centaurs, was the first to group stars into constellations and taught others how to read them





THE CHAOTIC YET CUNNING CENTAURS

Cursed by the gods to be born as a twisted abomination, these half-breed agents of anarchy were both wicked and wise

Written by Charles Ginger

By their very nature, the creatures that stalked the woods and wilds of Greek mythology were unpredictable, volatile beings capable of sudden flashes of violence as much as inspiration. Yet arguably no beast of legend competes with the centaur when it comes to mixing cunning with kindness.

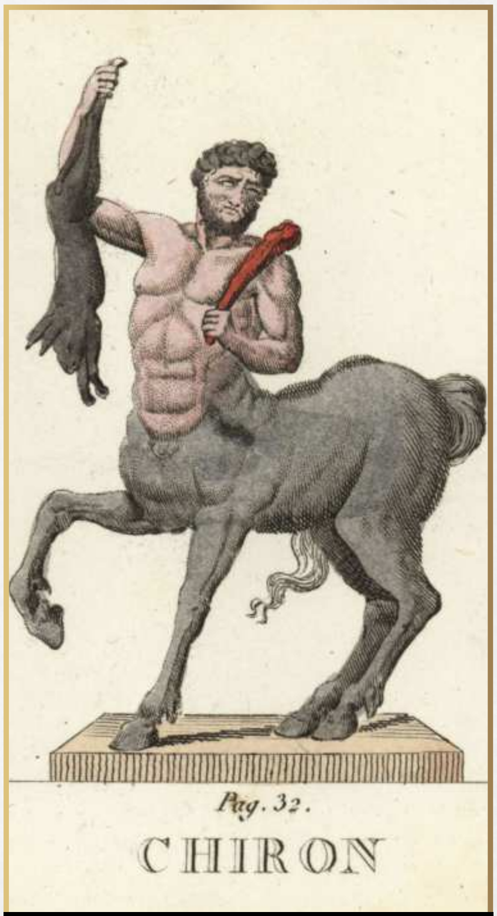
It's thought that the legend of the centaurs first spread when the Minoans (a people who built a civilisation on Crete and the other Aegean Islands) spotted nomadic riders and, aghast at how seamlessly both man and horse moved in unison, mistook them for a single creature.

Equipped with the legs and lower body of a horse and the torso and upper frame of a man (female centaurs, known as centaurides, are rare), these muscular beasts were widely viewed by the Greeks as barbarians determined to spread chaos and carnage. The first of their kind, Centaurus, was said to have been the offspring of King Ixion of the Lapiths (a legendary people believed to have populated Thessaly and Mt. Pelion) and Nephele, a cloud cast in the shape of Hera by Zeus to tempt Ixion. When the lustful monarch duly failed to restrain his urges and threw himself upon the phantom he mistook for Zeus' consort, the mighty king of the gods punished him by condemning his offspring to emerge as a hideous amalgamation of horse and man.

Despite the prevalence of accounts depicting these creatures as erratic and ruthless, not all centaurs were seen in this unforgiving light. Chiron, the most famous member of the species, is heralded in the legends for his wisdom, a deep knowledge that he used to tutor Asklepios (god of medicine), Hercules, Achilles and Jason (of Jason and the Argonauts). He is also said to have gifted Achilles a fearsome spear carved from Pelian ash (from the trees adorning the slopes of Mt. Pelion, where Chiron dwelled).

Another notable centaur is Pholos, who kindly offered Hercules refuge in his cave (along with food and wine) during the hero's efforts to capture the Erymanthian boar (the fourth of his 12 labours). Sadly for Pholos, his meeting with Hercules ended in tragedy when a band of centaurs (Chiron among them) decided to join them and became increasingly intoxicated on Pholos' wine. A fight soon broke out, during which Hercules accidentally killed Chiron with an arrow dipped in the poisonous blood of the Hydra. Pholos proceeded to drop another lethal arrow onto his foot, ensuring that he joined Chiron and the other centaurs in the afterlife.

> "These muscular beasts were widely viewed by the Greeks as barbarians"



Chiron, wisest of all the centaurs, taught Achilles archery and how to play the lyre

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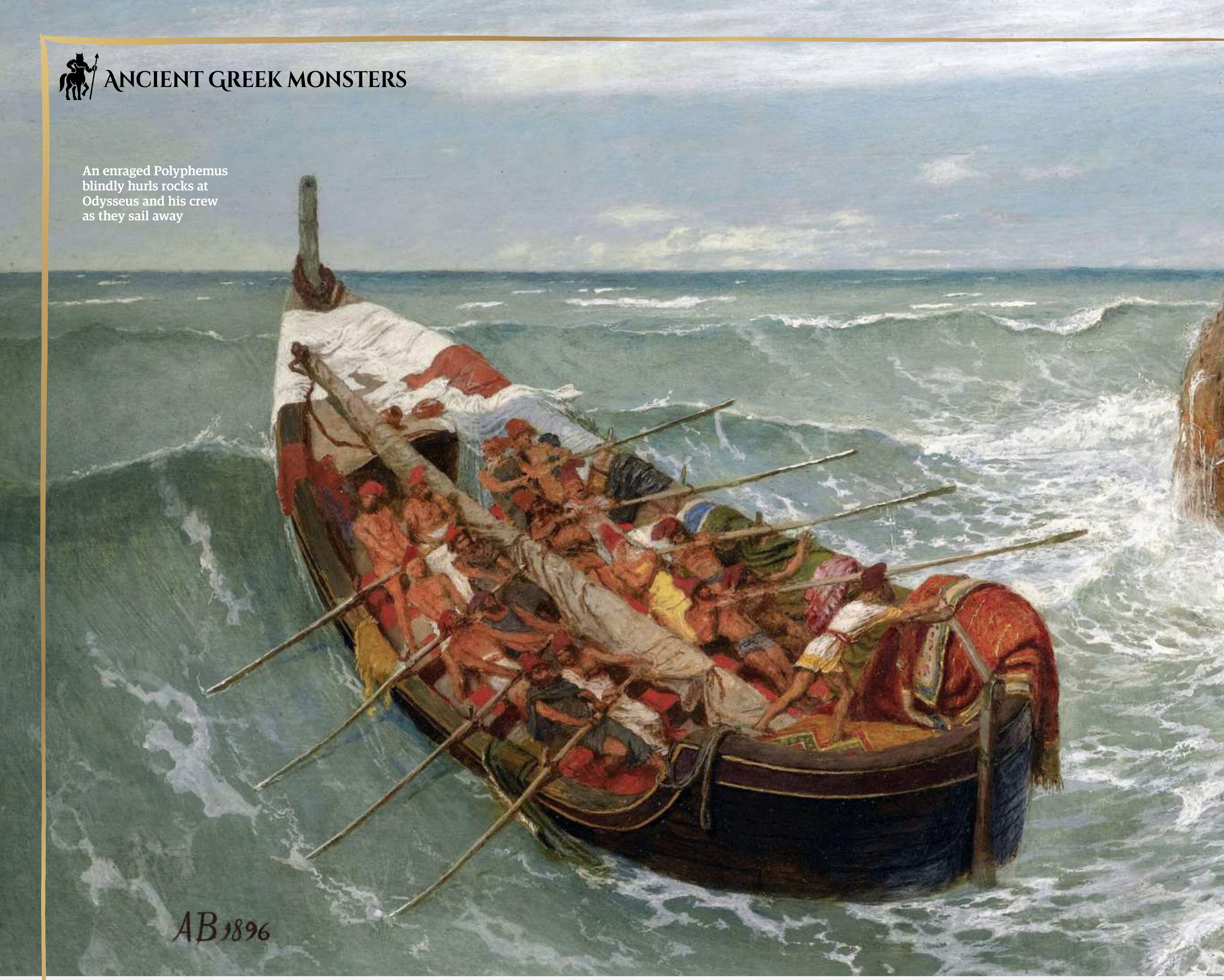
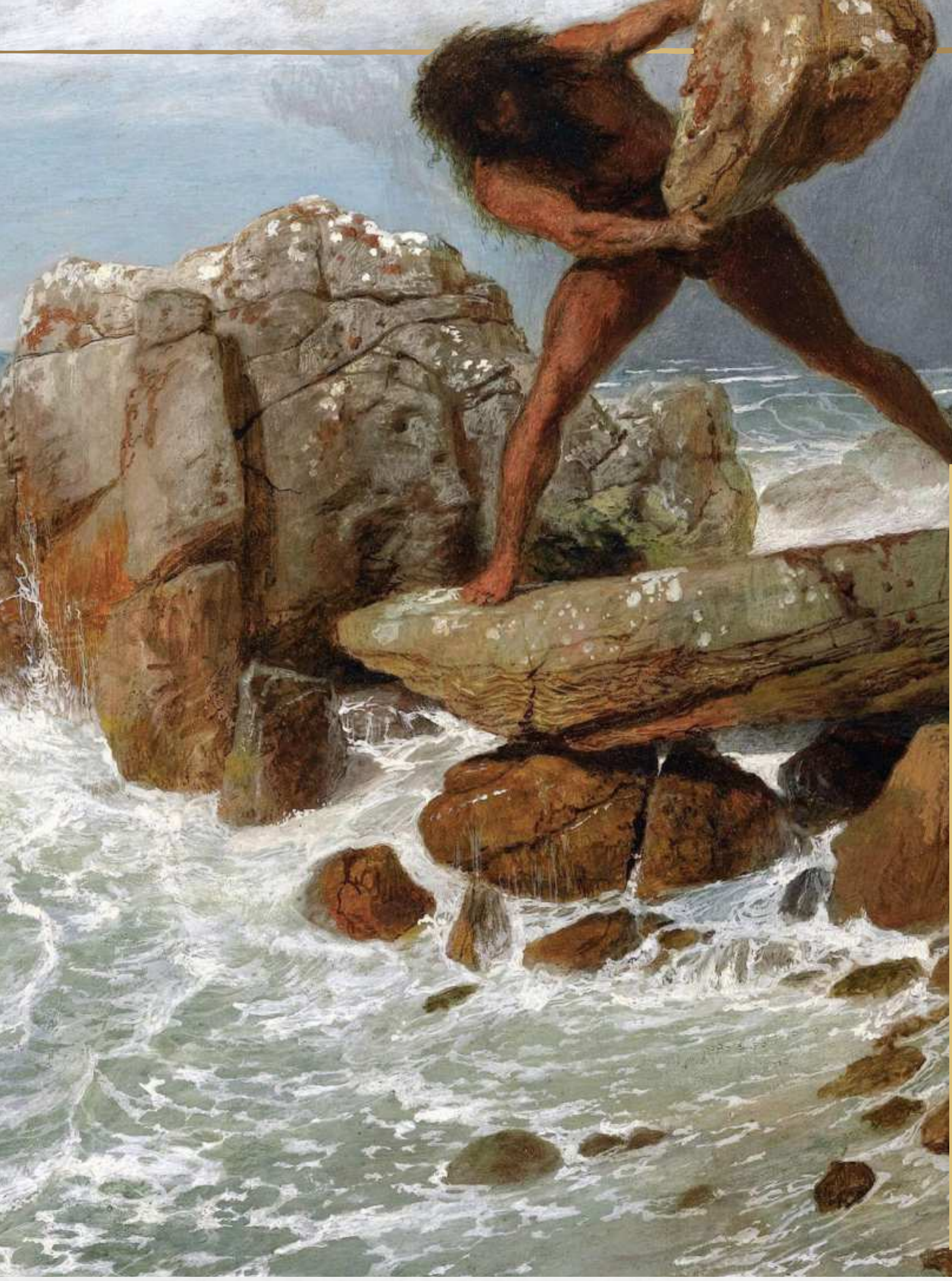


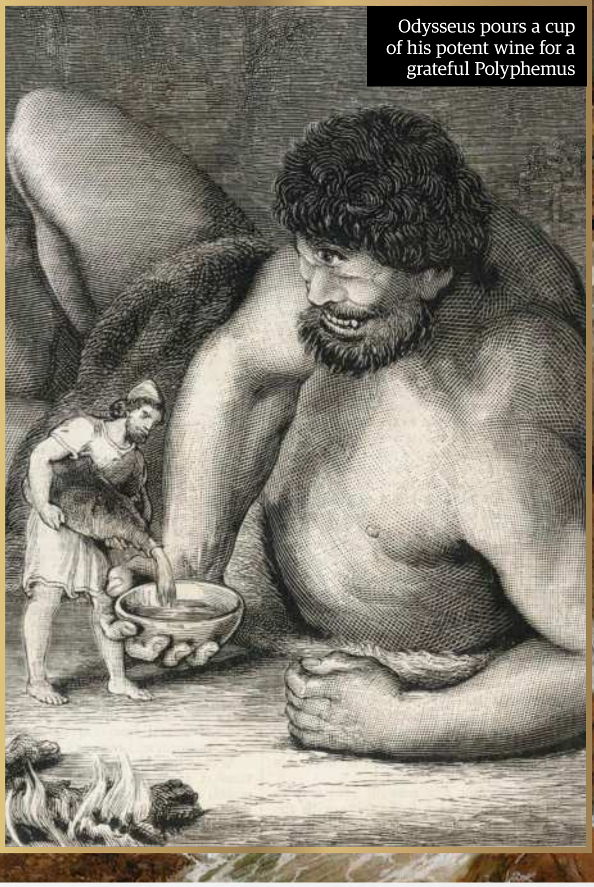
An enraged Polyphemus blindly hurls rocks at Odysseus and his crew as they sail away

THE SAVAGE YET SKILLED CYCLOPES

These one-eyed giants lived a harsh existence in a lawless land, but they also created some of the greatest artefacts of Greek myth

Written by Charles Ginger





Odysseus pours a cup of his potent wine for a grateful Polyphemus

The children of Earth (Gaia) and Sky (Ouranos), the cyclopes (meaning 'round eye') of Greek legend were not exactly blessed with looks or wit. Towering giants, they lived a primal life lacking in governance or any sense of community, spending much of their time tending to flocks of sheep and goats, seeing the world through one bulbous eye set in the centre of their foreheads.

Depicted as slavering cannibals by Homer and described by Hesiod as having "very violent hearts", it seems that cyclopes didn't have much time for outsiders. Given what befell the most famous of their kind, their suspicions of strangers was well founded.

Product of the ever-virile Poseidon, Polyphemus lived a solitary life largely dedicated to the care of his flock (and the consumption of any mortals unfortunate enough to venture on to his island) until the fateful day upon which Odysseus and his men came ashore during their efforts to return home from the Trojan War. Hungry and exhausted, the men wandered into a cave laden with food. Clearly aggrieved at the intrusion, Polyphemus blocked the entrance to the cave with a stone upon his return and proceeded to eat two of Odysseus' men. He then ate another two before leaving to tend to his sheep once more.

When he returned he made the mistake of accepting the offer of some strong wine from Odysseus. As he slowly slipped into a drunken stupor, Polyphemus inquired as to the identity of his guest. The quick-thinking hero of Homer's *Odyssey* replied, "No one." Before succumbing to sleep Polyphemus promised to eat 'No one' last as a token of his appreciation. Seizing on the opportunity presented by the giant's incapacity, Odysseus blinded the cyclopes with a wooden stake, waking him.

Bellowing in agony, Polyphemus groped around in search of his assailant. His cries of anguish were heard by other cyclopes nearby, who asked him to name his attacker. "No one!" howled Polyphemus. "No one hurt me!" Guessing that the invisible foe who wounded Polyphemus must have been a god, the other cyclopes warned him to pray. Meanwhile, Odysseus and his men clung to the bellies of Polyphemus' sheep (so as to avoid his grasp when he felt their backs in search of the men) and escaped back to their ship to continue their voyage.

When they weren't being blinded by Greek heroes, the cyclopes are said to have made thunderbolts for Zeus, a helmet for Hades that turned the wearer invisible, Poseidon's famous trident, and a silver bow for Artemis. Skilled craftsmen, cyclopes are also credited with constructing a number of Mycenaean cities, building 'cyclopean walls' with little or no mortar.

> "The cyclopes are said to have made thunderbolts for Zeus"

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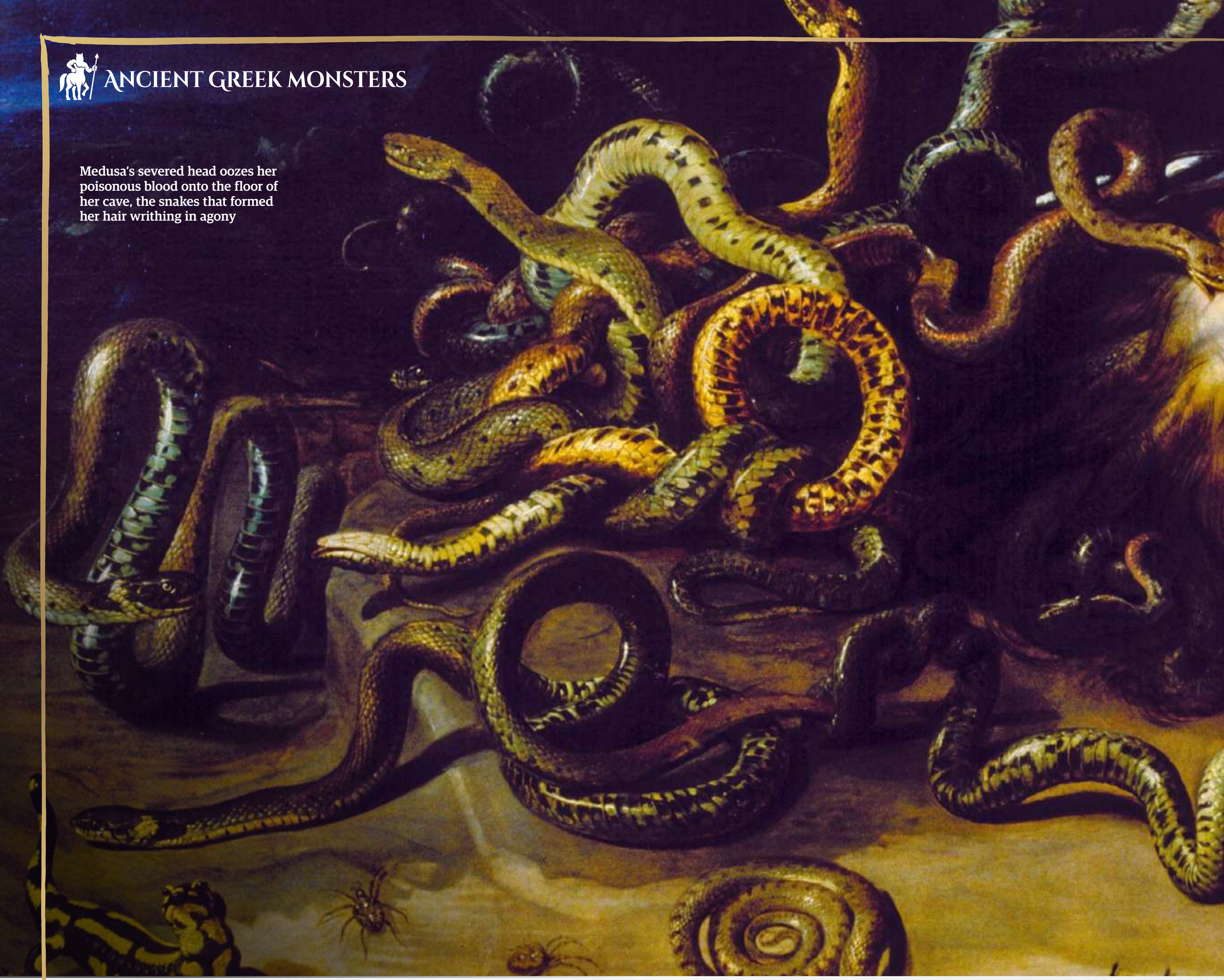


Medusa's severed head oozes her poisonous blood onto the floor of her cave, the snakes that formed her hair writhing in agony

NEVER LOOK A GORGON IN THE EYE

Taking the meaning of a stony look to the extreme, these ghastly creatures made for formidable foes

Written by Charles Ginger

NEVER LOOK A GORGON IN THE EYE

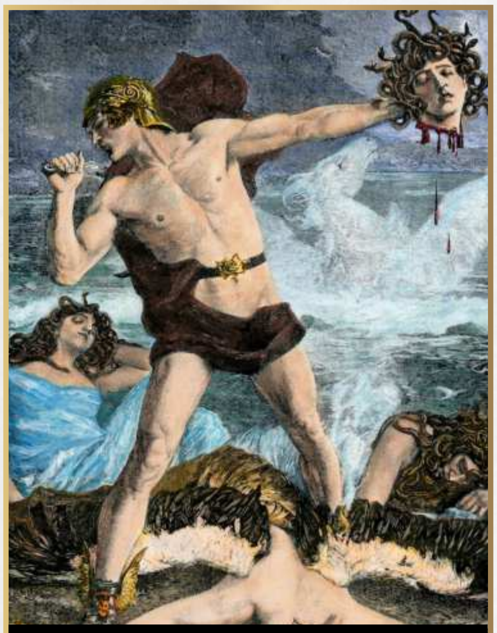
When a creature's name translates as 'dreadful' the chances are it isn't an adorable forest critter or a mischievous sprite, and it's safe to say that neither word applied to the gorgon sisters of ancient Greece.

Born to Phorcys and Ceto, gods of sea creatures and the dangers of the deep, Stheno, Euryale and Medusa are most commonly depicted with wide, staring eyes, protruding fangs and, most famously of all, a head of hair comprised of living snakes. However, other sources show them to have been incredibly beautiful. But whether they were hellish serpent-headed monsters or alluring women in human form, what is not in doubt is the danger they posed. Anyone foolish enough to have ventured into the caves in which the sisters dwelt (said to have been on the island of Sarpedon) would have been met with a look that could kill - literally. Lock eyes with a gorgon and you turn to stone.

> "Whether they were hellish monsters or alluring women, they posed a danger"

Perseus was well aware of this when he was challenged by King Polydectes of Seriphus to kill Medusa, a task the king hoped would result in Perseus' death, thereby enabling him to marry the dead hero's mother. Before daring to enter the gorgon's lair, Perseus located the Graiai, a trio of sisters who were siblings of the gorgons. These haggard creatures shared one eye and one tooth between them, and as they passed their eye around Perseus snatched it and forced them to reveal the location of the tools needed to slay Medusa: winged sandals, the helmet of Hades, a sickle, and a bag to store her head in. Frantic, the Graiai told Perseus where to find them.

Equipped with everything he needed, along with a mirrored shield from Athene, Perseus tracked Medusa down. Using her reflection to guide him (so as to avoid her glare), he was able to approach and decapitate the only non-immortal gorgon. Some sources claim he later used Medusa's head to turn King Polydectes and his retinue to stone, while others state that he saved Andromeda from the sea monster Cetus by exposing it to the dead gorgon's stare. Still other accounts tell of the titan Atlas being transformed into the Atlas Mountains by Medusa's head, and some legends say Perseus buried the head beneath the marketplace in Argos. Wherever Medusa's severed head was laid to rest, the danger of the gorgons lived on in the form of her vengeful sisters.



Gorgons were sometimes shown with wings sprouting from their backs

Perseus and the Gorgon by Laurent Marqueste

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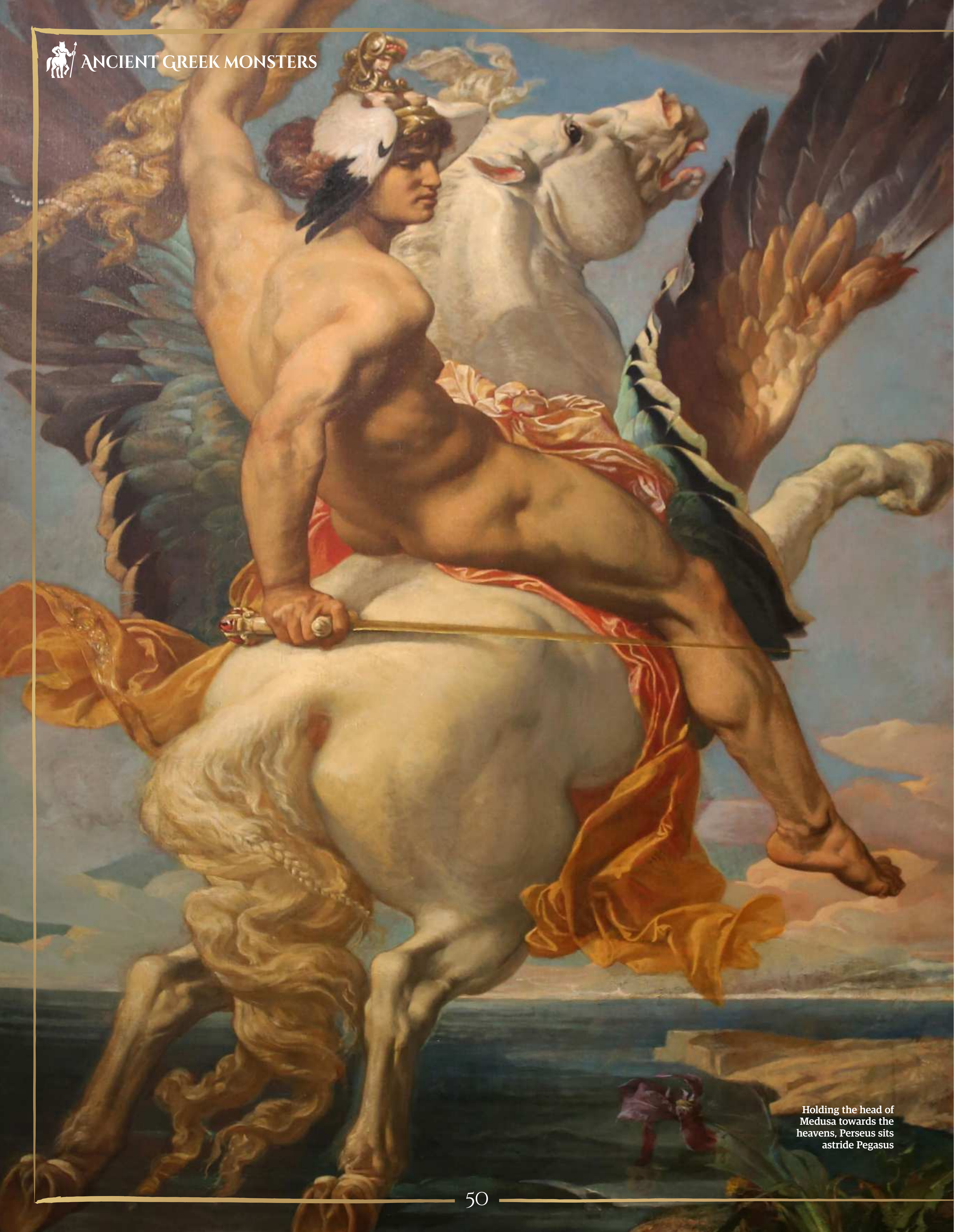


Holding the head of Medusa towards the heavens, Perseus sits astride Pegasus

PEGASUS: STEED OF HEROES

Erupting from the blood of his slain mother, this winged horse helped to vanquish some of the most fearsome figures in Greek mythology

Written by Charles Ginger

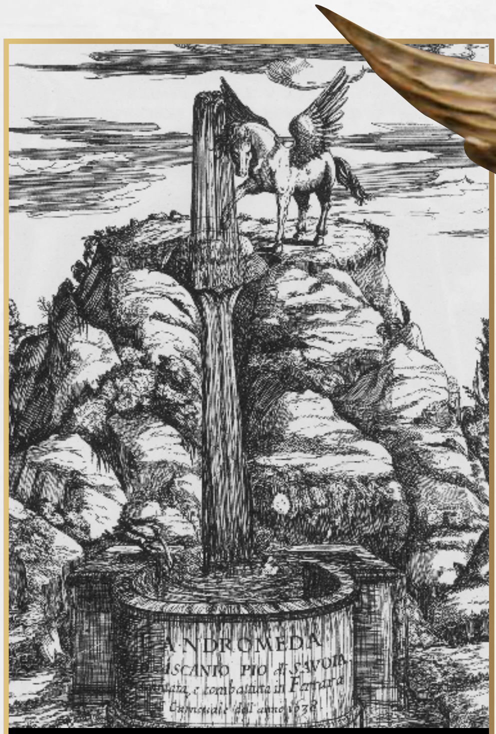
The most famous horse in history came into the world in fittingly dramatic fashion. As Perseus lifted the severed head of Medusa away from her limp body, the blood gushing from her gaping neck merged with the foaming of the sea, thereby merging the power of a gorgon with that of the mighty Poseidon. The result was the emergence of Pegasus, a winged horse (to reflect the form Poisedon is said to have taken when once seducing the gorgon), alongside his human brother, Chrysaor ('he who bears a golden sword').

Wild and untamed, the stallion flew to Mount Helicon, where he was raised for a time by the Muses. Such was the beast's excitement that his hoofbeats struck the earth with enough force to open springs in the mountainside, including the Hippocrene ('horse spring'). Later he flew to a spring known as Pierene (in Corinth, Greece), where he was eventually brought under control by Bellerophon (a Greek hero) with the help of Athene, who is said to have given him a golden bridle. (Other accounts claim that Athene tamed Pegasus before giving him to Bellerophon.)

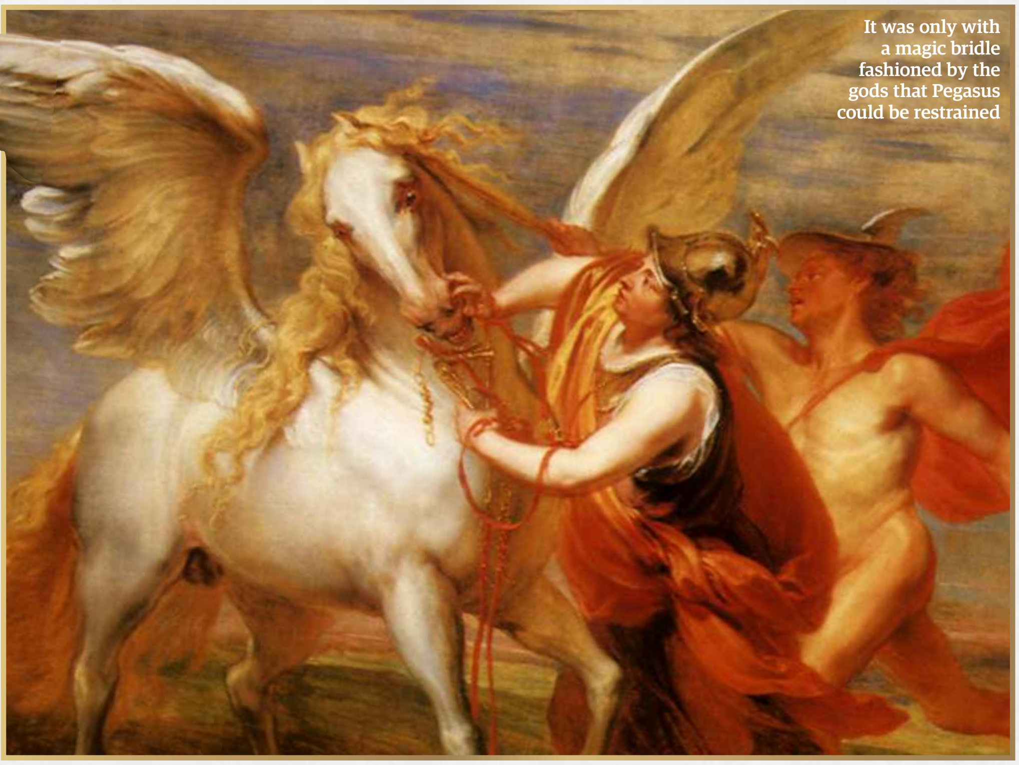
With the horse now calm and willingly submitting to its new rider, Bellerophon took off in search of the Chimera, a terrifying monster that blended a lion with the head of a goat jutting from its back and a scaled tail that ended in the head of a serpent. If that wasn't enough, it could also breathe fire. Able to harass the beast from the air, Bellerophon shot it with an arrow before descending with his spear aimed at the Chimera's throat. Ramming his weapon home, Bellerophon veered away as his enemy attempted to incinerate him. Unfortunately for the Chimera, its searing breath only succeeded in melting the spear into a molten liquid that choked it to death.

Proud of his incredible victory, Bellerophon attempted to fly to Mount Olympus to take his place among the gods. Outraged by his hubris, the gods unseated him from Pegasus, a fall that resulted in Bellerophon becoming lame.

As for Pegasus, most accounts claim that he lived out his final days among the gods on Olympus, often carrying thunderbolts for Zeus, who would turn him into a constellation upon his death. According to Medieval scholars, relatives of Pegasus may have lived on in the form of the Ethiopian Pegasus, a horse that boasted two horns and a pair of wings.



Pegasus stands atop Mount Parnassus, a sacred mountain in Greek mythology and the winged horse's home



It was only with a magic bridle fashioned by the gods that Pegasus could be restrained

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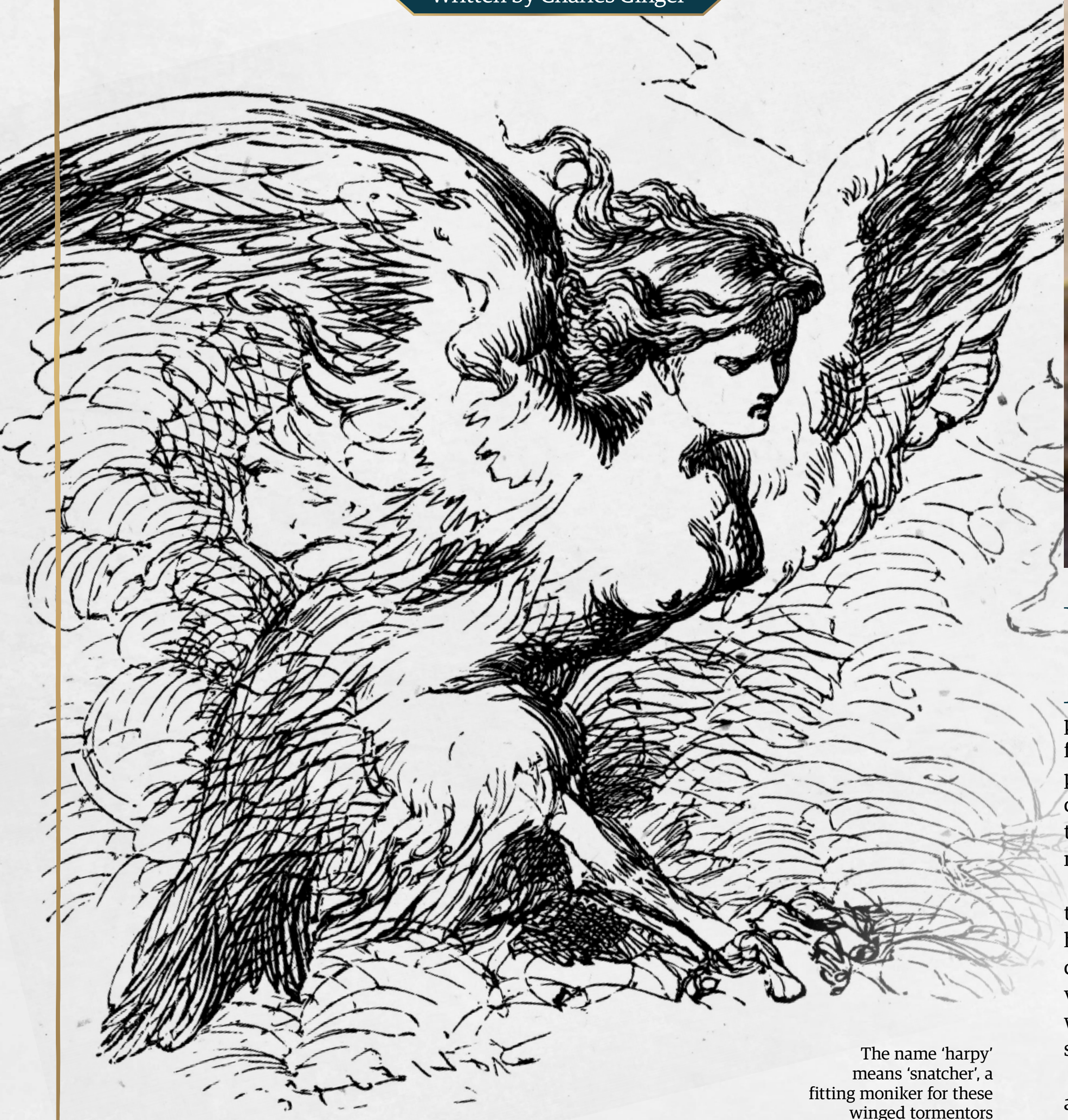
EVERY SINNER FEARED THE HARPIES

In ancient Greece an act of evil never went unpunished, for the harpies were never far away

Written by Charles Ginger

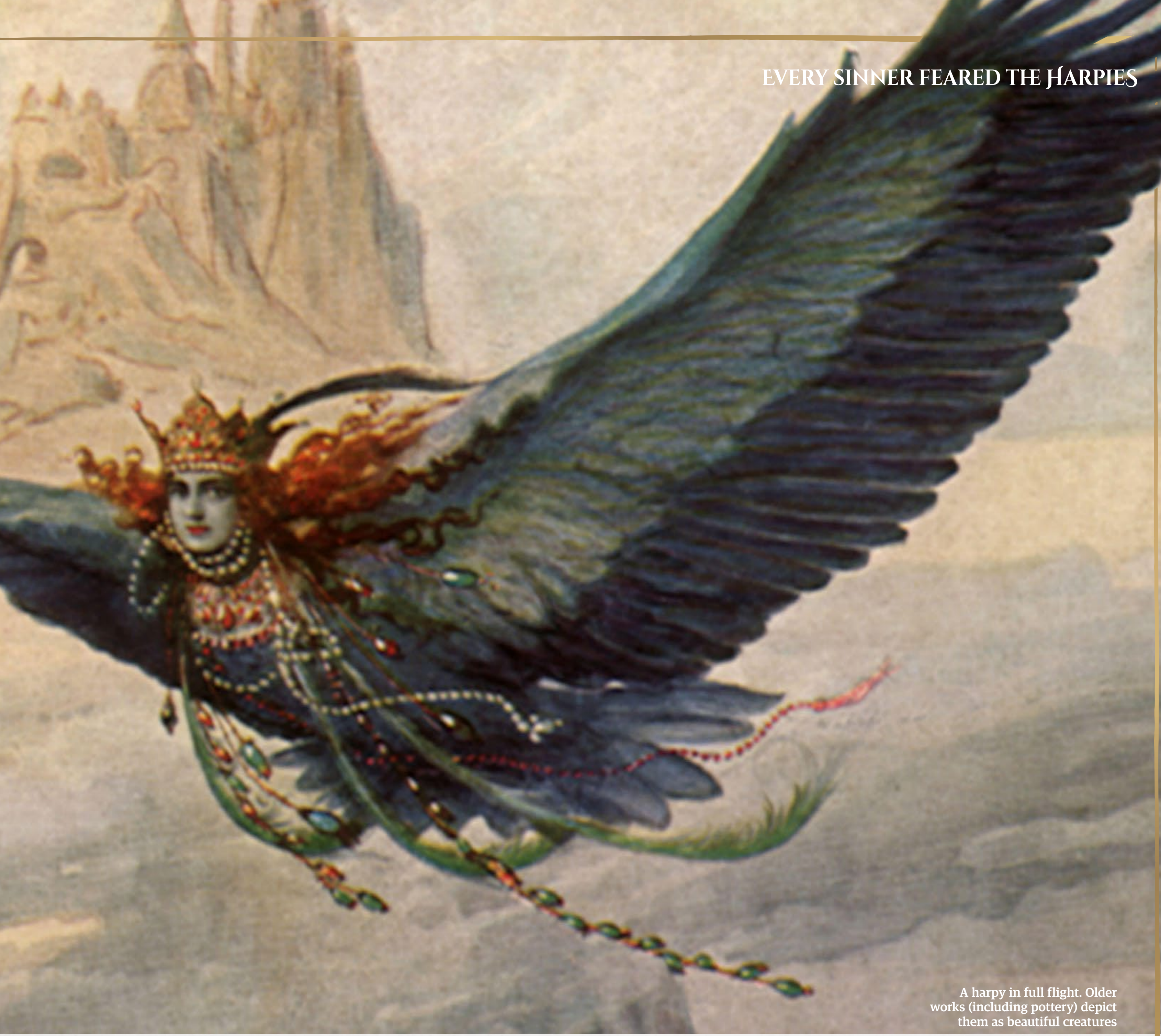


The name 'harpy' means 'snatcher', a fitting moniker for these winged tormentors

Every one of us mere mortals has done something in their life they aren't proud of, and sometimes we may feel we've been punished adequately, perhaps even too severely. But spare a thought for the wrongdoers of Greek mythology, for their penance was borne on wings and delivered in the clutches of talons. For those who strayed from the path of righteousness, the harpies showed no mercy.

Described as having the head of a woman and the body, wings and claws of a bird of prey, a harpy was a beguiling but deadly adversary, one capable of pecking, clawing and tormenting its victims. Seen as the embodiment of destructive winds, among their number were Aello (storm swift), Ocypete (swift wing) and Celaeno (dark).

Whomever made the mistake of breaking an oath or committing an act of evil in ancient



A harpy in full flight. Older works (including pottery) depict them as beautiful creatures

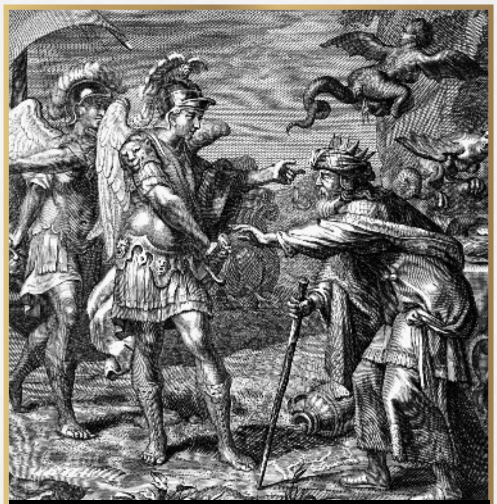
Greece needed to prepare themselves for the harpies. These ceaseless servants of the Erinyes (goddesses who punished evildoers) would snatch up their targets and whisk them off for divine retribution.

As with the gorgons, some scholars and craftsmen painted harpies as beautiful winged women, while others tended towards a less-generous casting as ravenous, foul-smelling monstrosities. Regardless of their true looks, one figure in particular would come to loathe them.

Given the gift of prophecy by Zeus, King Phineus of Thrace foolishly decided to reveal the gods' plans to his fellow men. Incandescent with rage, Zeus gave Phineus a horrifying choice: blindness or death. Choosing the former, Phineus duly enraged Helios (god of the Sun), who dispatched harpies to plague his every move and steal his food before he could eat it.

Driven mad by hunger and the endless attacks of the harpies, Phineus seemed doomed to never eat again. Fortunately, deliverance would arrive in the form of Jason and the Argonauts. Desperate to be free from the harpies' attentions, Phineus explained to Jason and the crew that the wing-footed Boreads (brothers named Calais and Zetes who were accompanying Jason and his men) were fated to help him.

Eventually convinced that they would not be punished for interfering, the Boreads stood back as Phineas sat down to eat. When the harpies inevitably descended the brothers gave chase, pursuing them for miles. They were only prevented from killing the harpies by Iris (messenger to the gods) promising that they wouldn't return to harass Phineus. He was one of the lucky ones. The harpies rarely left their victims in peace.



A grateful Phineus thanks the Boread brothers Calais and Zetes for driving the harpies away

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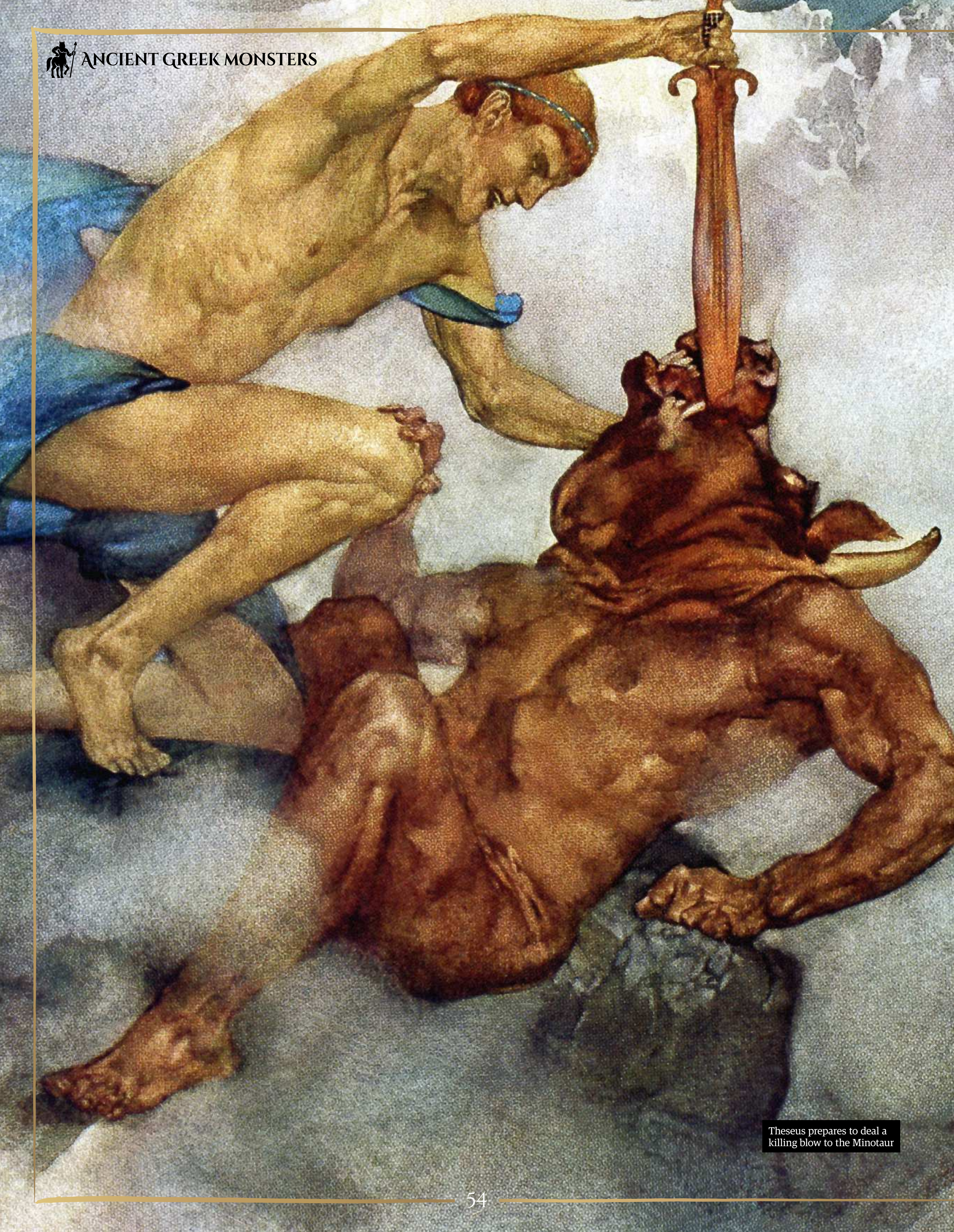
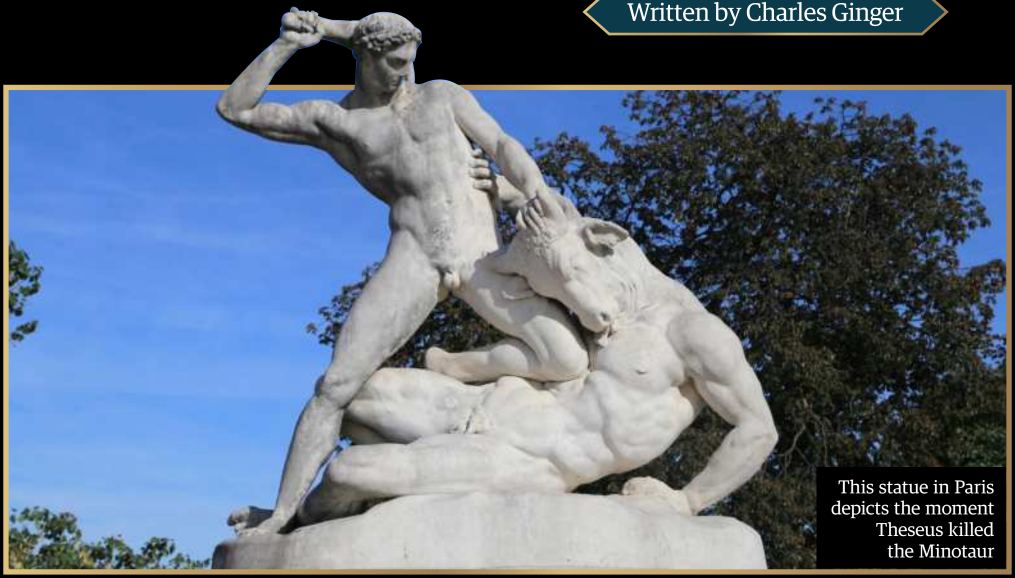


Theseus prepares to deal a killing blow to the Minotaur

THE HIDDEN TERROR OF THE MINOTAUR

Entombed inside the shadowy passages of the Labyrinth, this hulking beast feasted upon the flesh of innocents

Written by Charles Ginger


This statue in Paris depicts the moment Theseus killed the Minotaur

Racing down a seemingly endless passageway bathed in the flickering light of torches, the children hit another dead end. Frantic, they turn down another corridor, this one darker than the last. It twists and turns and yet offers no way out. As they sprint up another a loud, heaving snort echoes behind them, followed by the booming steps of the creature that calls this place home. Another rush of air escapes its flared nostrils as it comes closer, nearing the edge of the passage in which the children are now hopelessly trapped. A bulking arm followed by a thick, muscular leg rounds the corner, joined a second later by the wide, hairy head of a bull resting upon human shoulders, horns jutting towards the ceiling. It stops a moment to sniff the air, catching the scent of its prey. And then it charges.

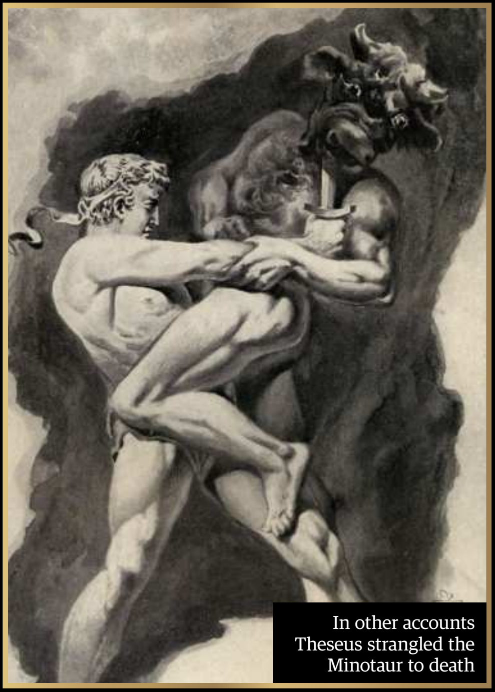
The monstrous result of Queen Pasiphae of Crete's relations with a bull Poseidon had sent her to sacrifice, the Minotaur is without doubt one of the most terrifying creatures of Greek myth. And yet it was also a victim of the whims of others far more powerful than it would ever become.

Enraged by Pasiphae's bestial proclivities, Poseidon made her fall in love with her offspring. The poor beast was then incarcerated by an (understandably) riled King Minos inside the ingeniously constructed Labyrinth, brainchild of the inventor and architect Daedalus (who himself barely managed to escape his own creation).

Years later, when Androgeous, a son of King Minos, was killed by a group of Athenians, his vengeful father concocted a suitable punishment. Every other year (or, according to some sources every nine years) seven youths and seven maidens were to be sent to the island as a sacrifice for the Minotaur. This payment in flesh was duly paid on two occasions, condemning 28 children to a horrifying end inside the Minotaur's maze of death. However, when the time came to send a third batch of innocents to their demise, a hero named Theseus bravely volunteered to take the place of one of the children.

Equipped with a ball of wool given to him by Ariadne, daughter of King Minos, Theseus tied one end to a doorpost, brandished a sword he had been secreting inside his tunic and ventured into the Labyrinth. Mindful to follow his new love's instructions to keep going forward, down and never left or right, Theseus eventually found the Minotaur sleeping in the depths of its lair.

A savage fight ensued as the enraged Minotaur sought to defend its territory, but, as in most tales of heroism, the protagonist emerged victorious, with Theseus stabbing the beast through the throat before removing its head.


In other accounts Theseus strangled the Minotaur to death

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MIDDLE EASTERN & AFRICAN MONSTERS

58 MONSTERS OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA
The continent of Africa and the far-reaching Middle East are supposedly home to some amazing creatures, from long-lost plesiosaurs to blood-sucking vampires and werewolves

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One of the best known supernatural creatures in Middle Eastern mythology, the jinn are said to have been fallen angels punished by God

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Who would not quake in the presence of such a magnificent and mysterious creature, keeper of treasure and guardian of the divine?

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The mixture of an animal body with a human head was seen as monstrous, divine, and mysterious – just like the Sphinx herself

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The fiery bird that rises from the ashes of its nest-pyre also has a darker side...

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Hailing from Arabian and Persian fairy tales, mentions of this mythical creature span centuries

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As messengers of the gods and protective spirits of ancient Mesopotamia, lamassu and shedu mixed animal with human, standing outside the natural world

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First encountered in Arabic folklore, ghouls are accursed beings doomed to live in deserted cemeteries and feast on the flesh of the dead

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The terrifying man-eating manticore has its basis in ancient Persian myths and would later become a popular theme for Medieval art

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The beautiful African mermaid Mami Wata is believed to bestow good fortune on those who worship her

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These wicked spirits are as feared today in East Africa as they were during pre-Islamic times

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Indigenous South African villages were tormented by a mysterious phenomena of healthy people dying in their sleep. Were the malevolent tokoloshe to blame?

84 DEMONS FROM HELL
From earliest times many have feared that the world was populated by demons ready to attack humans and destroy them – either physically or spiritually

MONSTERS OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

The continent of Africa and the far-reaching Middle East are supposedly home to some amazing creatures, from long-lost plesiosaurs to blood-sucking vampires and werewolves

Written by Joanna Elphick

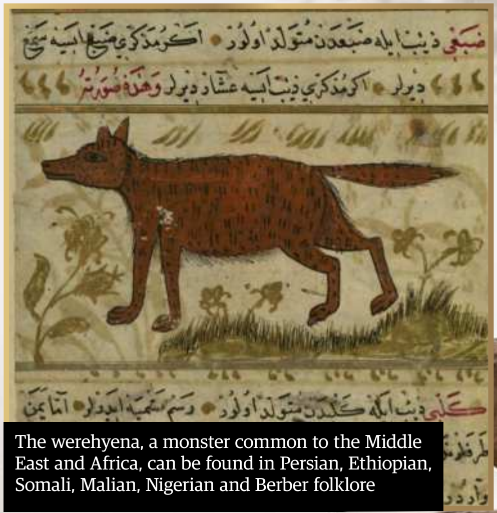
Often referred to as the Cradle of Humankind, most scientists are convinced that modern humans first evolved in Africa and gradually spread across Asia before making their way into Europe. Various migratory waves commonly known as the Northern Route (via the Nile Valley), the Southern Route (via the Bab-el-Mandeb between Yemen and the Horn of Africa), and the Eastward Route (to Arabia), clearly explain why so many ancient mythical beasts of African folklore have found themselves rearing their ugly heads across the Middle East and into European consciousness and beyond.

Frightened merchants, following the customary trade routes across Africa and into the Middle East, were inclined to swap tales of monstrous adversaries of mythical proportions that they, or someone they had heard tell of along the way, had encountered and fought off with varying success. Those that travelled across the seas told of vast serpents, whilst those traipsing along the dusty roads and byways spoke of cunning tree spirits and evil cave-dwelling demons. The various tribes shared their fears, each group reinforcing the veracity of their experiences to the next village and, in this way, word of the African monsters spread from place to place. But what grotesque beasts could possibly frighten the brave Zulu nation, Ngoni people, or the courageous Maasai warriors?

River monsters have always proved an issue for the people of Africa. Mokele-mbembe, meaning ‘he who stops the flow of rivers’, is said to live in the waterways of the Republic of Congo and is reminiscent of Scotland’s Loch Ness Monster with its long, sinuous neck and thrashing tail. A disease outbreak in the Congo is often attributed to the bisimbi bi masa, mythical nymphs so wicked that they spread fatal viruses in the water. Mamlambo has the neck of a snake and the body of a 60-feet long fish with short, stubby legs. Her piercing eyes are said to glow a luminous green in the darkness. However, the most infamous of all the water monsters is the Grootslang of South Africa. This 50-feet long serpent resembles a green metallic dragon, capable of devouring elephants with one bite. As with many dragons the world over, Grootslang coverts all things shiny and guards a watery cave filled with diamonds, the only thing he truly cares for. Danger for the local fishermen of Zambia and Angola doesn’t necessarily come from the water itself. Kongamato, ‘the breaker of boats’, attacks from the skies above. With its red leathery wings spanning seven feet, snapping jaws and razor-sharp claws, this huge flying monster looks like a pterodactyl as it swoops in for the kill.

Those that travel by land may well stumble across a trickster. Although known the world over, Africa is host to a wide variety of these cunning creatures who often take the shape of an animal. Ngofariman of Mali in West Africa, takes the form of a wily chimpanzee, whilst the most magical of them all, Anansi, presents himself as a spider. This particular trickster is the King of Stories and, although naughty, he is thought to be extremely wise and in no way evil.

Dwarves and gnomes are often considered to be European creatures but the jungles and forests of Africa are supposedly inhabited by a multitude of tiny folk. The abiku ghosts, feared by the Yoruba tribes, steal the food and drink from the mouths of the villagers’ children until they eventually starve to death. In this way, the creation of such creatures has mentally absolved the parents when they are unable to provide for their offspring. The invisible Wokulo dwarves of Mali are equally greedy, taking supplies from the village people, but not all little people are evil. The tiny Aziza folk of Dahomey live in the



The werehyena, a monster common to the Middle East and Africa, can be found in Persian, Ethiopian, Somali, Malian, Nigerian and Berber folklore

Griffin-like creatures have made their way from ancient Egyptian and Assyrian legend to European heraldry by way of ancient Greece

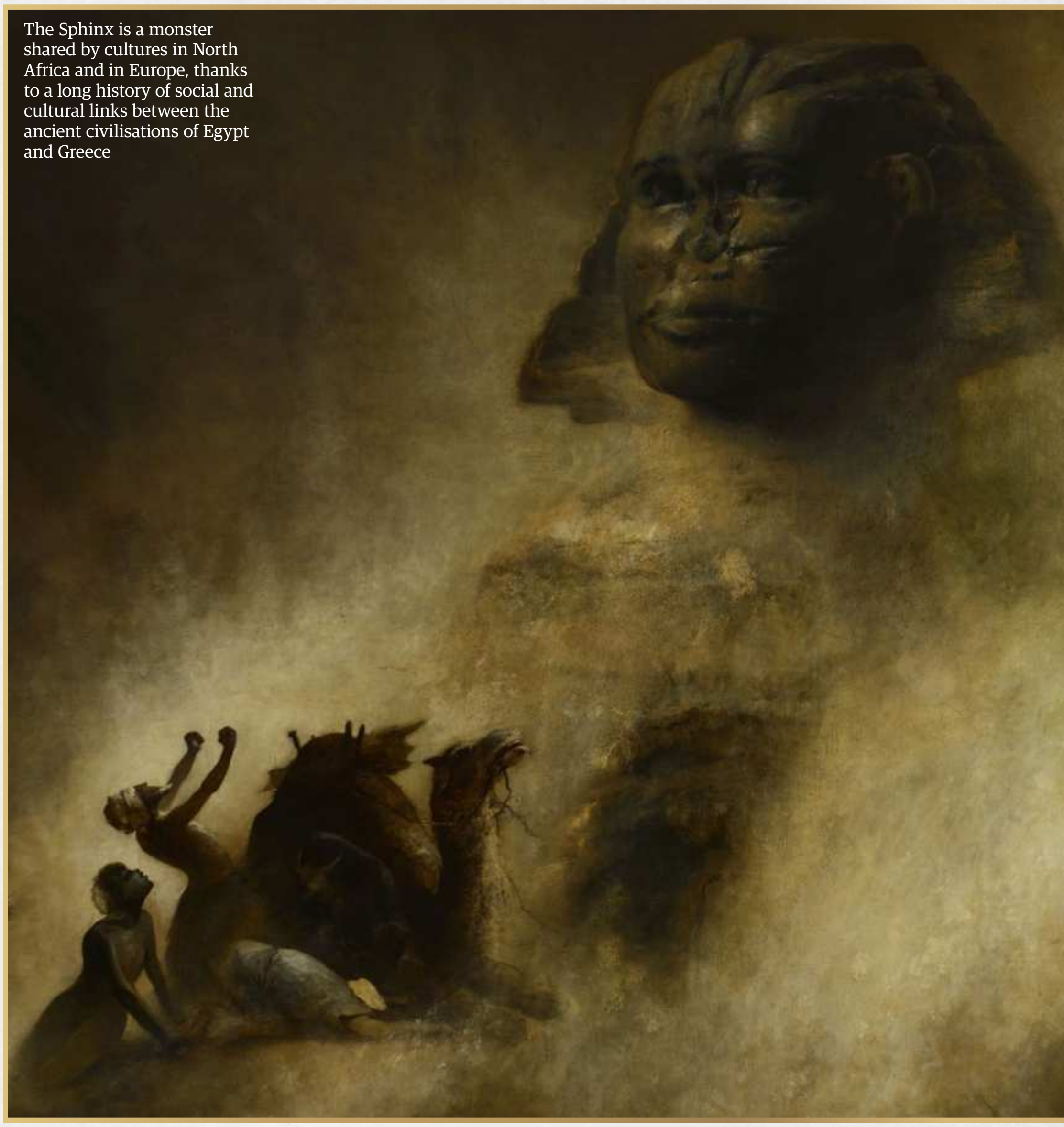
WITH A FLASH OF LIGHTNING

In order for humans to thrive upon this planet, they have had to adapt to their often harsh surroundings, learning to work with the land and its geographical layout. Soils can be tended, rivers can be crossed and rocky outcrops can become useful shelter, but, try as they might, man has never found a way to harness the weather. As a result, many stories linking uncontrollable weather patterns and monstrous beasts have spread around the globe. Africa and the Middle East, with their sometimes unrelenting storms and merciless heat, are no exception.

The Inkanyamba is a gigantic serpent with the head of a zebra that is said to dwell in the deep pools underneath Howick Falls in South Africa. The Zulu people once revered this monstrous beast, believing that, if woken from its sleep, it would bring tornedoes, thunder, and life-threatening floods to the area.

The God Serpents, Damballa and Ayida-Weddo, originally from Nigeria and Benin and now revered as loa in Haitian and African-American Voodoo traditions, are a married pair of gentle dragon-like creatures, thought to bring about rainbows as they ride across the sky.

Mythical creatures can help to explain the awesome power of a lightning strike over the plains of South Africa



The Sphinx is a monster shared by cultures in North Africa and in Europe, thanks to a long history of social and cultural links between the ancient civilisations of Egypt and Greece

anthills and smoke very long pipes as they share their wisdom with the nearby villagers.

Mention vampires and most people tend to imagine the bloodsucking Count Dracula of Transylvania rather than an African fiend. However, many European monsters can be traced back to the Cradle of Humankind or the Middle East, having crossed into ancient Greece before spreading further afield. Strangely, unlike their European counterparts, the West African vampires are drawn to the light rather than repelled by it. Throughout Ghana, the evil adze, a vampiric witch with the ability to shape shift, transforms into a tiny firefly in order to slip under a closed door before revealing its true form and sucking its victims dry. The Asanbosam hangs upside down from the trees by its sharp iron claws like a monstrous troll-bat, waiting to drink the blood of any passers-by. Meanwhile, vampire sorcerers known as abayifo terrorise the Ashanti. Travelling as a fiery ball of light, an obayifo possesses villagers, causing them to glow from their eyes and mouth, whilst sucking their blood. A visit from this malicious creature does not bode well for the village since it causes crops to fail and fruit to wither on the trees, literally sucking the life from the village and its inhabitants.

However, the earliest known reports of vampirism can be found in ancient texts from Assyria, or northern Iraq as it is known today. Taking mythological tales from their Sumerian predecessors, the Assyrians feared vampiric demons known as utukku, who had once been human but, having died and been buried, became malevolent spirits after their relatives had failed to honour them with offerings and memorials in death. These seething spirits were thought to have clawed their way up from the underworld and proceeded to suck the life-force from all who crossed their path through drinking their blood and draining away their souls.

Further bloodsucking tales developed in Mesopotamia and filtered into Canaanite and Jewish culture. Lilith, the supposed first wife of the first man, made from clay rather than Adam's rib, rejected her husband and ran away with an

What kind of monstrous creatures could terrify the mighty Zulu warriors?

© Wiki images/Nick Roux; getty images

> “Many European monsters can be traced back to Africa or the Middle East, having crossed into ancient Greece”

array of demons. Having given birth to many jinn babies, it is told that she returned to the world of humans as an owl, harassing sleeping men sucking the blood of children.

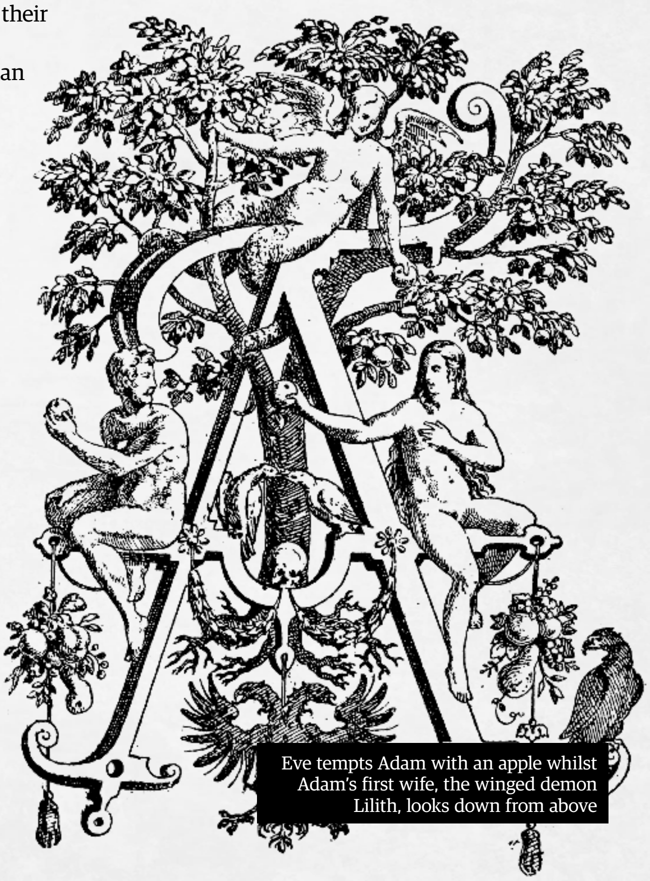
Considering that ancient Greece was almost certainly the portal for the migration of Mesopotamian travellers with their wealth of beliefs and mythical tales, it is no wonder that many familiar creatures can be traced back to this starting point.

The first description of a man transformed into a werewolf appears in the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* and reappears in Greek mythology when Zeus turns King Lycaon of Arcadia into a snarling wolf. Arabian folklore also tells of the qutrub, a human transformed into a wolf that feeds on the bodies of the dead.

Similarly, today’s Western concept of the zombie, or living dead, is little more than an Arabian shape shifting ghoul. These spectacularly gruesome creatures were said to hide in caves, waiting to predate upon unsuspecting travellers.

Other bizarre beasts have remained in their place of origin. The Arabian nasnas, for example, with its demon father and human mother, can make its victim fleshless by simply touching them. It has one of every body part and hops along on its one muscular leg. Not all monsters that come from the Middle East are vile. The magnificent shadhavar is a form of unicorn but, unlike its European fairy tale counterpart, this creature has 42 branches stemming from the horn like a beautiful tree. An enchanting musical sound can be heard as the wind blows through each branch. Unlike the samm-abras, a monstrous gecko, said to spread leprosy, the yellow-spotted zulal, a worm no bigger than a finger, is filled with cold water and can be caught by humans during times of drought. This tiny creature that breeds in snow acts as a beacon of hope during hard times when there is no sign of rain.

Monsters come in many shapes and sizes from the gigantic fire-breathing reptiles of the sky to the scheming, slippery creatures that hide beneath your feet, but one thing binds them together. All are born from fear. Humanity has always feared the unknown and the uncontrollable, and in order to make sense of and harness the power of nature, we have created monsters. Sea serpents can account for tragic shipwrecks, wrathful demons can rationalise droughts or floods, and vengeful spirits can justify a run of bad luck. The people of Africa and the Middle East have battled their harsh geographical location and tempestuous weather for centuries. No wonder then that here, man and monster continue to live side by side.



Eve tempts Adam with an apple whilst Adam’s first wife, the winged demon Lilith, looks down from above

THE SHAPE SHIFTING JINN

One of the best known supernatural creatures in Middle Eastern mythology, the jinn are said to have been fallen angels punished by God

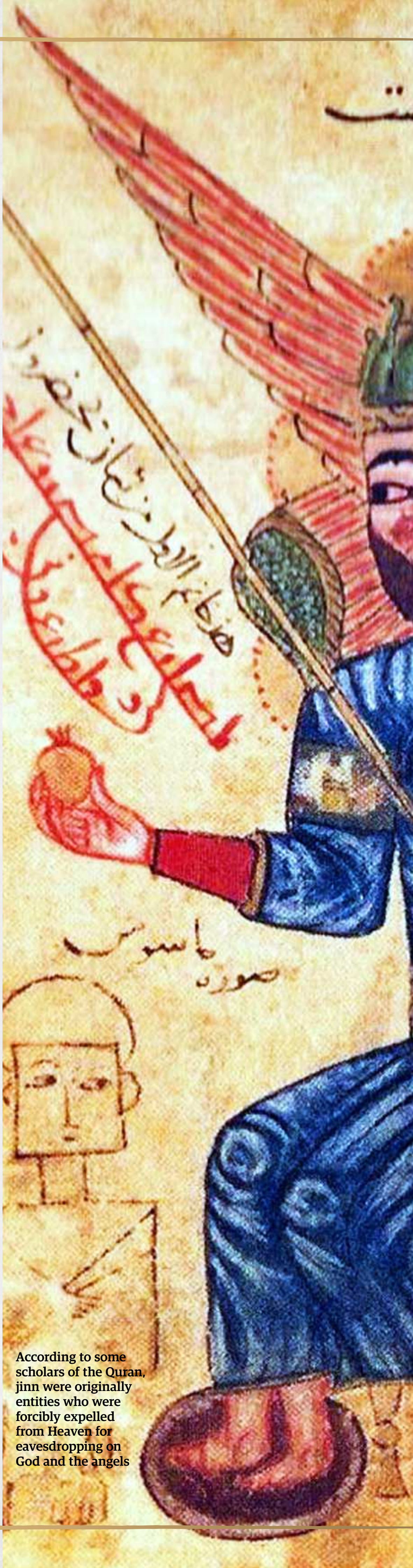
Written by Melanie Clegg

The origins of the jinn, one of the most well known supernatural creatures in Arabic mythology, are now obscure but they have been a constant feature of Middle Eastern folklore from the very earliest times, when they were described as being evil shape shifting spirits who lurked around deserted places and enjoyed the ability to transform themselves into animals in order to evade detection. Unlike other demonic beings however, jinn were generally regarded as being relatively benign and, like humans, being equally disposed towards both good and evil with the result that some fictional jinn are mischievous and violent, while others are helpful and act as supportive mentors to the humans that they befriend, particularly sorcerers who are able to use magic in order to bind jinn to their service.

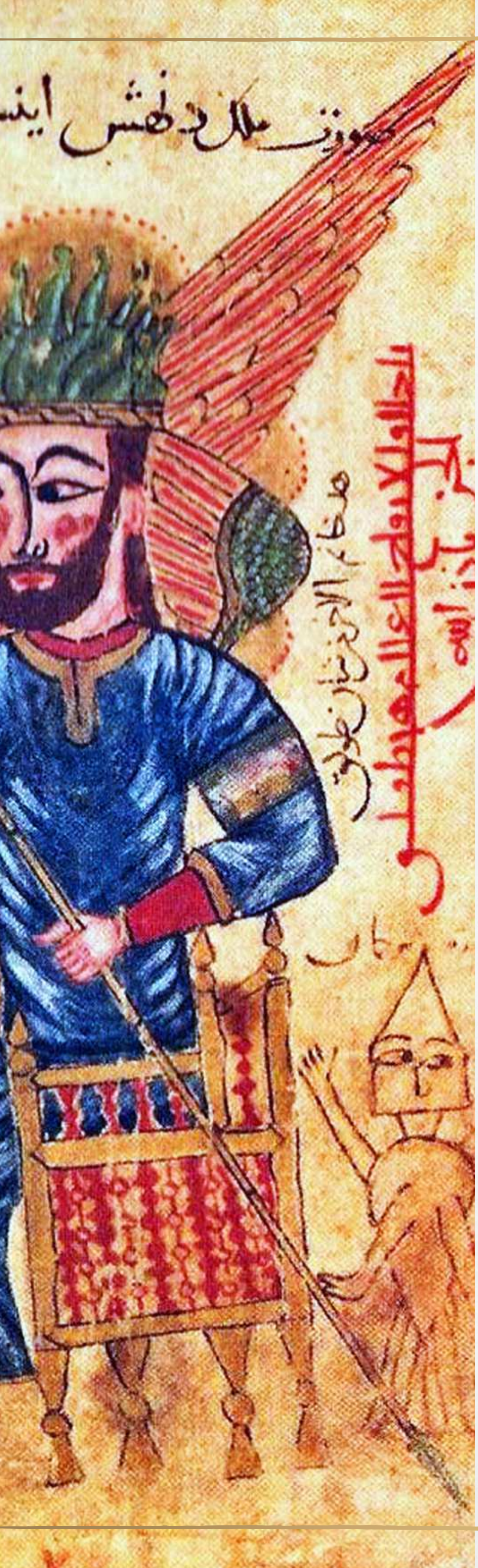
In the Arabic classic, *One Thousand and One Nights*, jinn are depicted as being kind and helpful and blessed with the ability to immediately transport themselves to wherever they wish to be. At one point, jinn were even worshipped as a form of lesser deity, although their relative weakness and mortality, which meant that they could theoretically be killed by humans, prevented them from being considered true gods. However, jinn were nonetheless feared and respected for their shape shifting abilities, intelligence and ability to vanish into thin air, which meant that they were able to ambush their enemies. They were also believed to be able to possess their victims and drive them mad, often at the bidding of powerful sorcerers who subjugated them with magic and sent them to do their bidding.

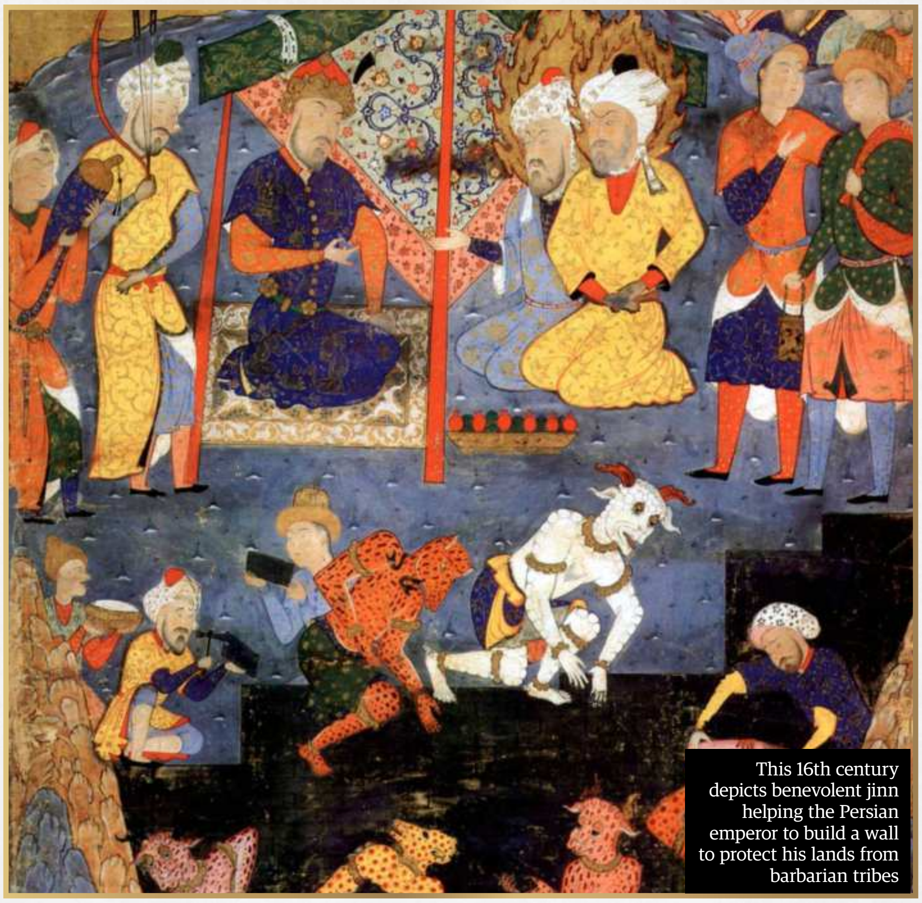
There are several mentions of jinn in the Quran, where they are depicted as both nature spirits and also lesser deities – a state that they were reduced to in order to prevent humans from worshipping them instead of God. According to scholars of the Quran, jinn are generally regarded as a specific, almost superhuman entity, with either an angelic or demonic nature, who inhabit an unseen world that allows them to interact with humans if they wished but otherwise pass undetected, often in the shape of an animal. According to some Quran traditions, before humans were created by God, the earth was inhabited by battling angels and jinn, who were eventually vanquished and forced into hiding amongst the mortals, whom they envied for their close relationship to God and pitied for their lack of supernatural powers. Unsurprisingly, many scholars have suggested that the jinn are comparable to the fallen angels of Christian tradition, who become demons after being forced out of Heaven.

> "According to some Quran traditions, before humans were created by God, the earth was inhabited by battling angels and jinn"

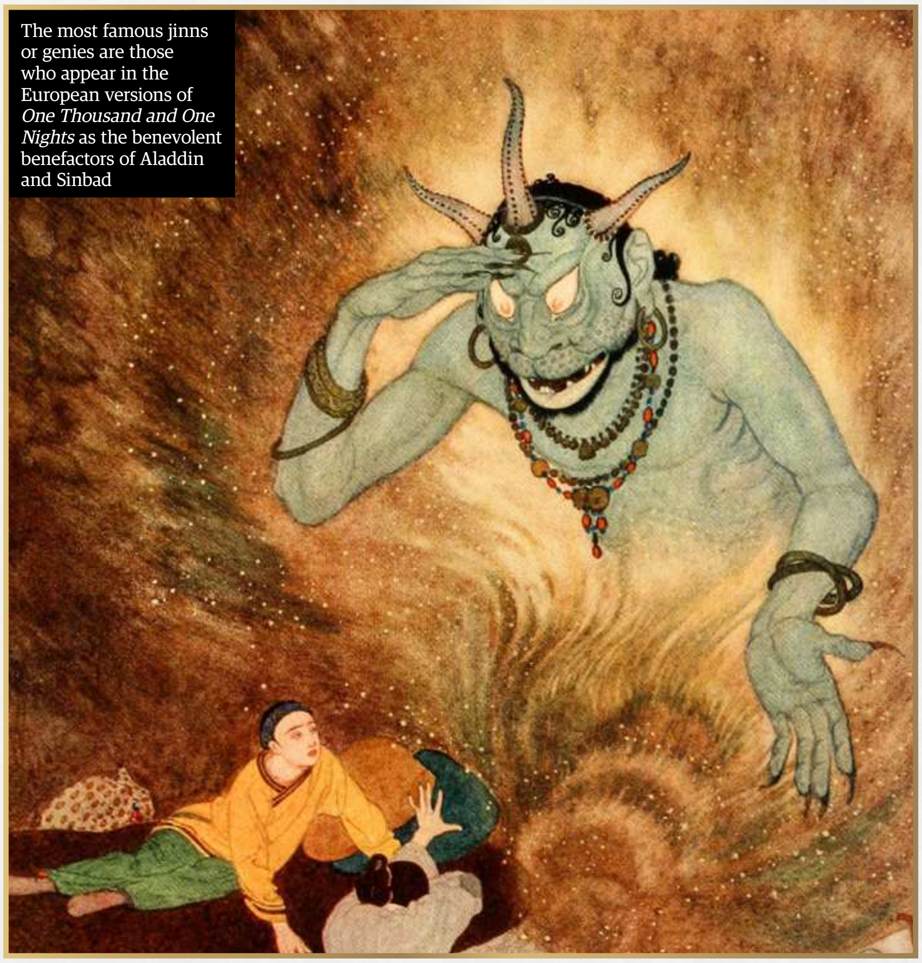


According to some scholars of the Quran, jinn were originally entities who were forcibly expelled from Heaven for eavesdropping on God and the angels



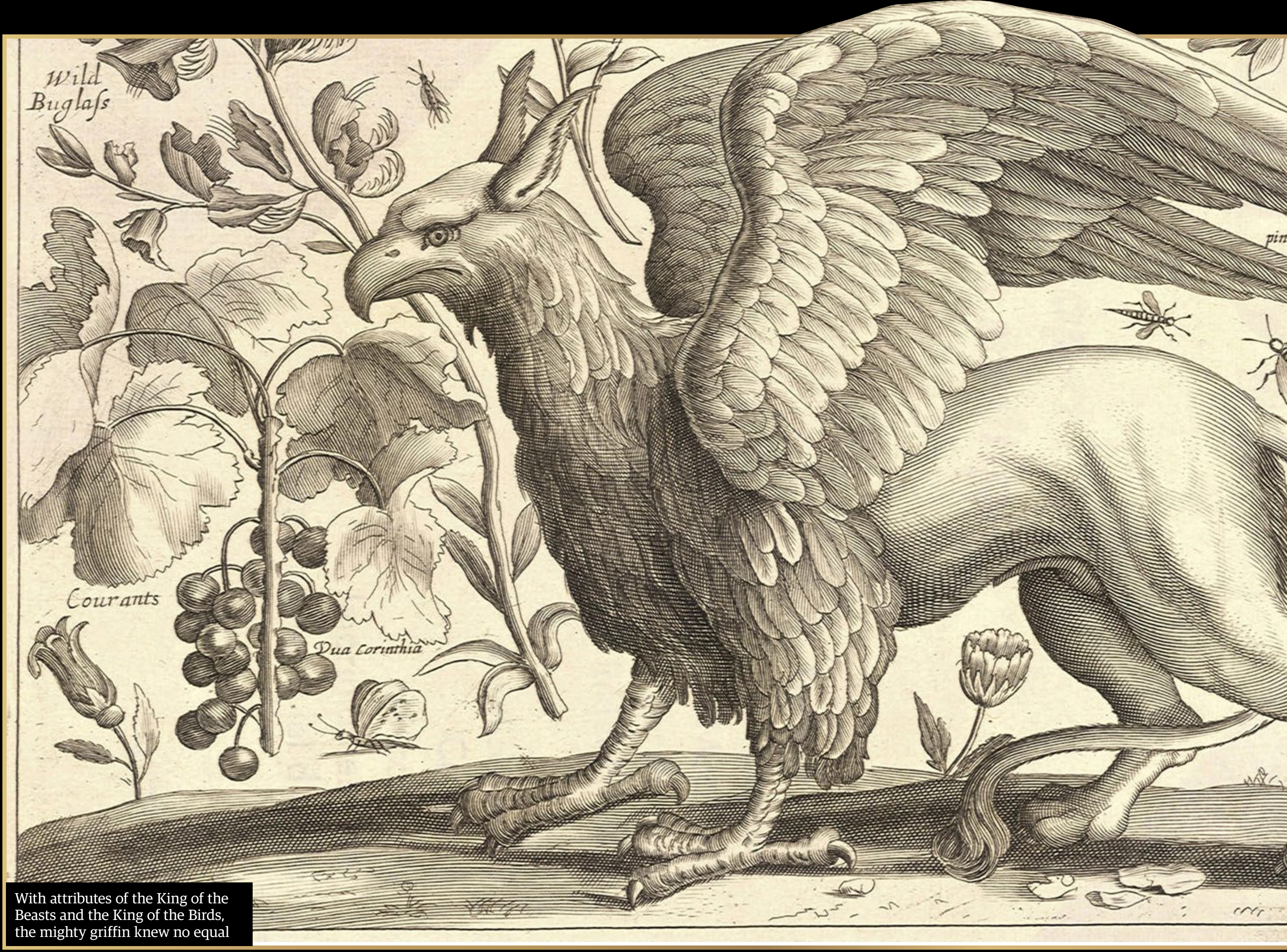


This 16th century depicts benevolent jinn helping the Persian emperor to build a wall to protect his lands from barbarian tribes



The most famous jinns or genies are those who appear in the European versions of *One Thousand and One Nights* as the benevolent benefactors of Aladdin and Sinbad

© Alamy.

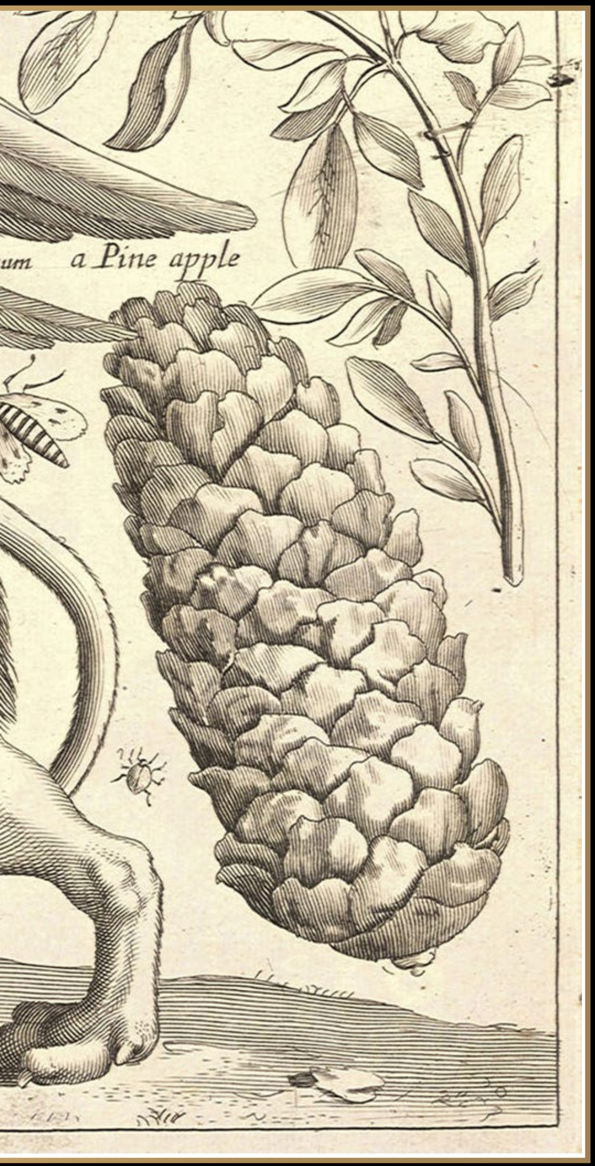

Wild Buglaſs
Courants
Vua Corinthia

With attributes of the King of the Beasts and the King of the Birds, the mighty griffin knew no equal

THE LEGENDARY GRIFFIN

Who would not quake in the presence of such a magnificent and mysterious creature, keeper of treasure and guardian of the divine?

Written by Willow Winsham



According to legend, the griffin is a creature that is a blend of two of the most majestic creatures known to man: the lion and the eagle. With the body, hind legs and tail of the lion and the wings and head of an eagle, the griffin can lay claim to being one of the most powerful creatures of all.

Griffin-like beasts date back to antiquity, seen in the art of ancient Egypt and Iran from earlier than 3000 BCE. There is also evidence of the griffin from the Levant, Anatolia and Syria in the period 1950-1550 BCE. Later, the griffin came to be associated with Jesus and divine power.

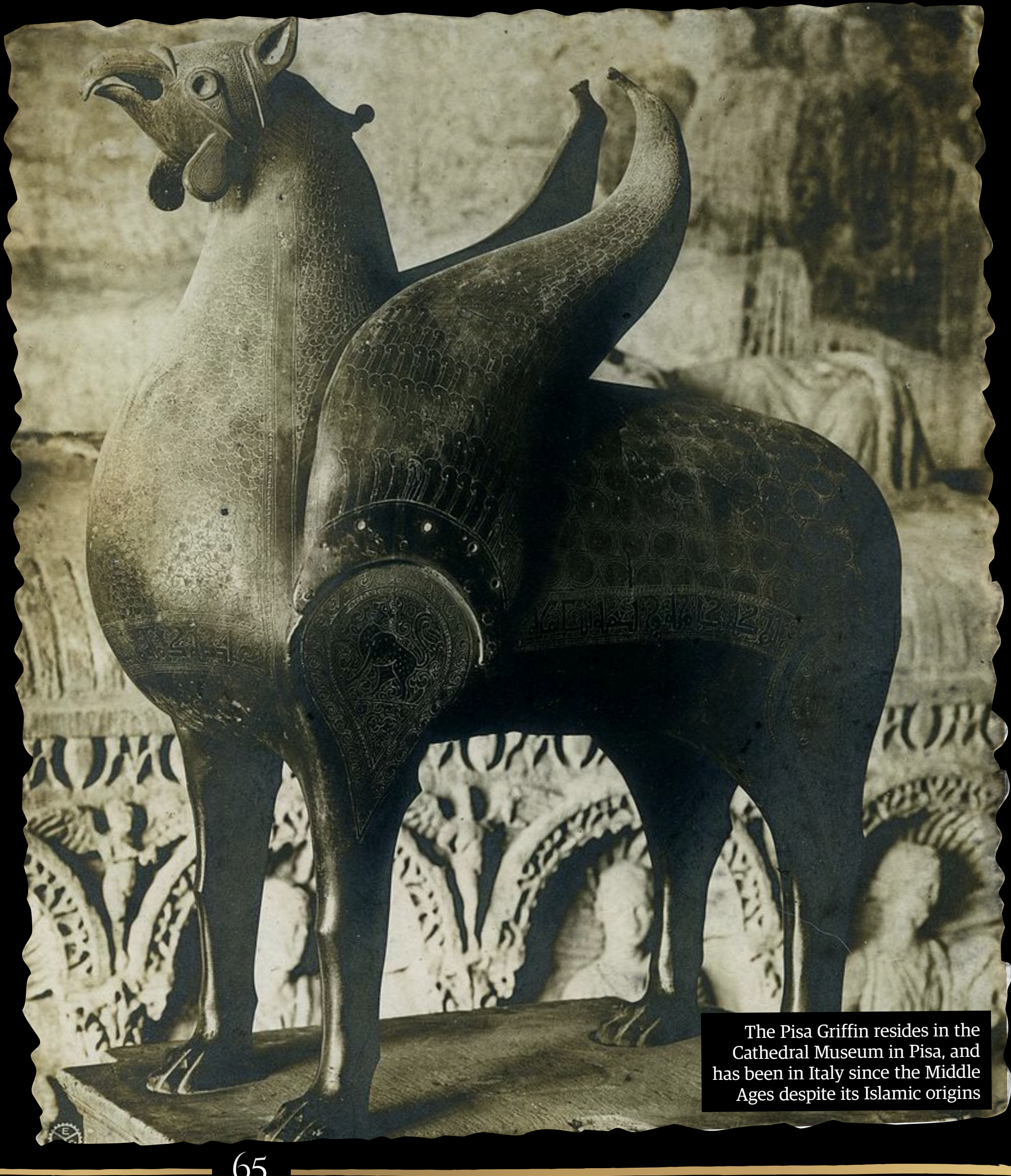
If Pliny is to be believed, griffins made burrows on the ground where they laid their eggs. In the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, the griffin's beak was said to be so strong that it could dig up nuggets of gold. The griffin was almost unbeatable where other animals were concerned, and could beat elephants and mythical dragons. The tiger alone was immune to the griffin's strength, due to its great speed. Despite sharing physical attributes with the eagle however, the griffin did not share its ability to fly. The magical properties of the griffin were well documented. A feather had the power to return sight to the blind. The claw of the griffin was large enough that goblets were fashioned from them: the fact that they were actually antelope horns does little to spoil the story. Griffin eggs - or ostrich eggs - were considered a great treasure.

The griffin can also be found in heraldry, representing strength, leadership and courage. A famous depiction of the creature is the Pisa Griffin. This large sculpture made of bronze dates back, it is thought, to the 11th century, and, at over three feet tall, can boast of being the largest bronze Islamic sculpture from that time period.

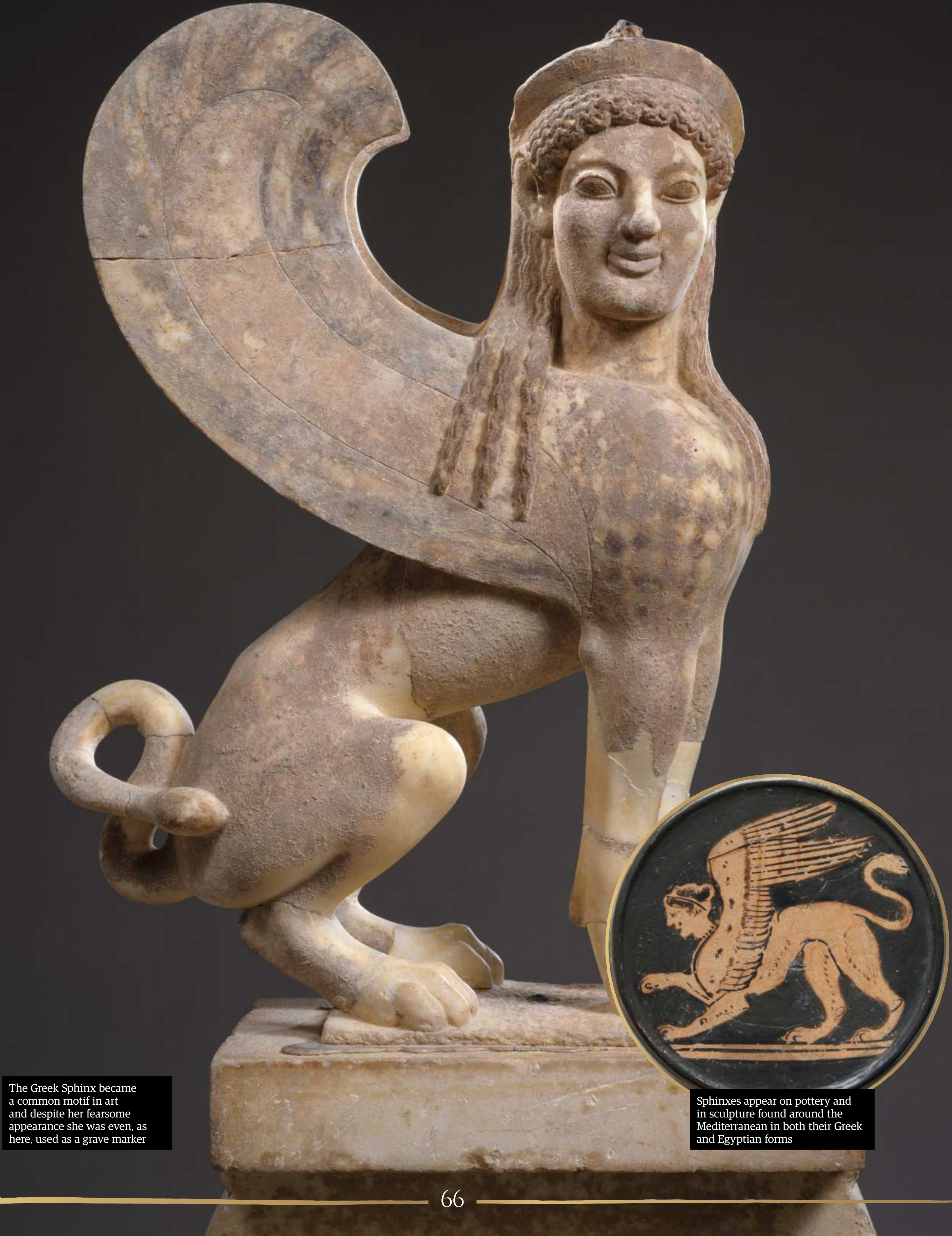
Griffins mated for life: if a griffin's mate died, the remaining griffin would remain alone, partner-less until their own death. The creature was said to be able to procreate with other animals: the result of a griffin mating with a mare, for example, is a hippogriff.

The griffin has captured the creative imagination of many and features in works such as Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson* series, *My Little Pony* and *Harry Potter*. You will also spy griffins in a variety of advertising and logos worldwide.

Depictions of griffins can be found worldwide, such as this mosaic in Rhodes museum


The Pisa Griffin resides in the Cathedral Museum in Pisa, and has been in Italy since the Middle Ages despite its Islamic origins

©Alamy



The Greek Sphinx became a common motif in art and despite her fearsome appearance she was even, as here, used as a grave marker

Sphinxes appear on pottery and in sculpture found around the Mediterranean in both their Greek and Egyptian forms

THE INSCRUTABLE SPHINX

The mixture of an animal body with a human head was seen as monstrous, divine, and mysterious – just like the Sphinx herself

Written by Ben Gazur

"What goes on four feet in the morning, two feet at noon, and three feet in the evening?"

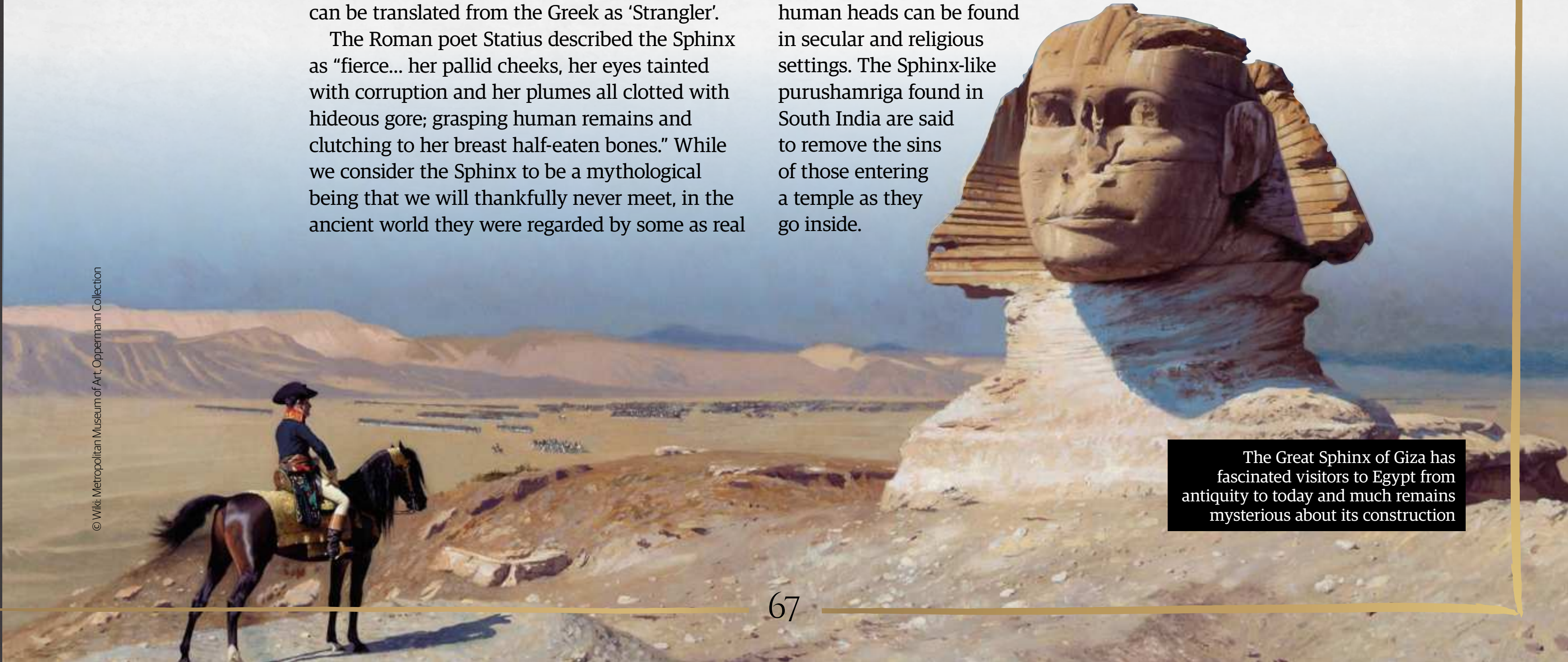
So goes the most famous riddle from antiquity. The answer, as many know, is a human. We crawl on all fours as babies, walk on two feet as adults, and with a walking stick in old age. Only the hero Oedipus was able to solve this riddle. Who posed this question though? What has the head of a woman, body of a lion, and the wings of an eagle? The answer to both questions is the same - the Sphinx.

In Greek mythology, chimeric creatures made from the body parts of differing animals stood outside the natural order and so were seen as threatening supernatural beings. The Sphinx in particular was a danger because she employed the brute strength of animals with a wicked intellect. And if you failed to answer her puzzle then she was more than happy to kill you. Sphinx can be translated from the Greek as 'Strangler'.

The Roman poet Statius described the Sphinx as "fierce… her pallid cheeks, her eyes tainted with corruption and her plumes all clotted with hideous gore; grasping human remains and clutching to her breast half-eaten bones." While we consider the Sphinx to be a mythological being that we will thankfully never meet, in the ancient world they were regarded by some as real creatures that could be encountered. According to Pliny the Elder many sphinxes could be found in Ethiopia where they had brown fur and a pair of breasts.

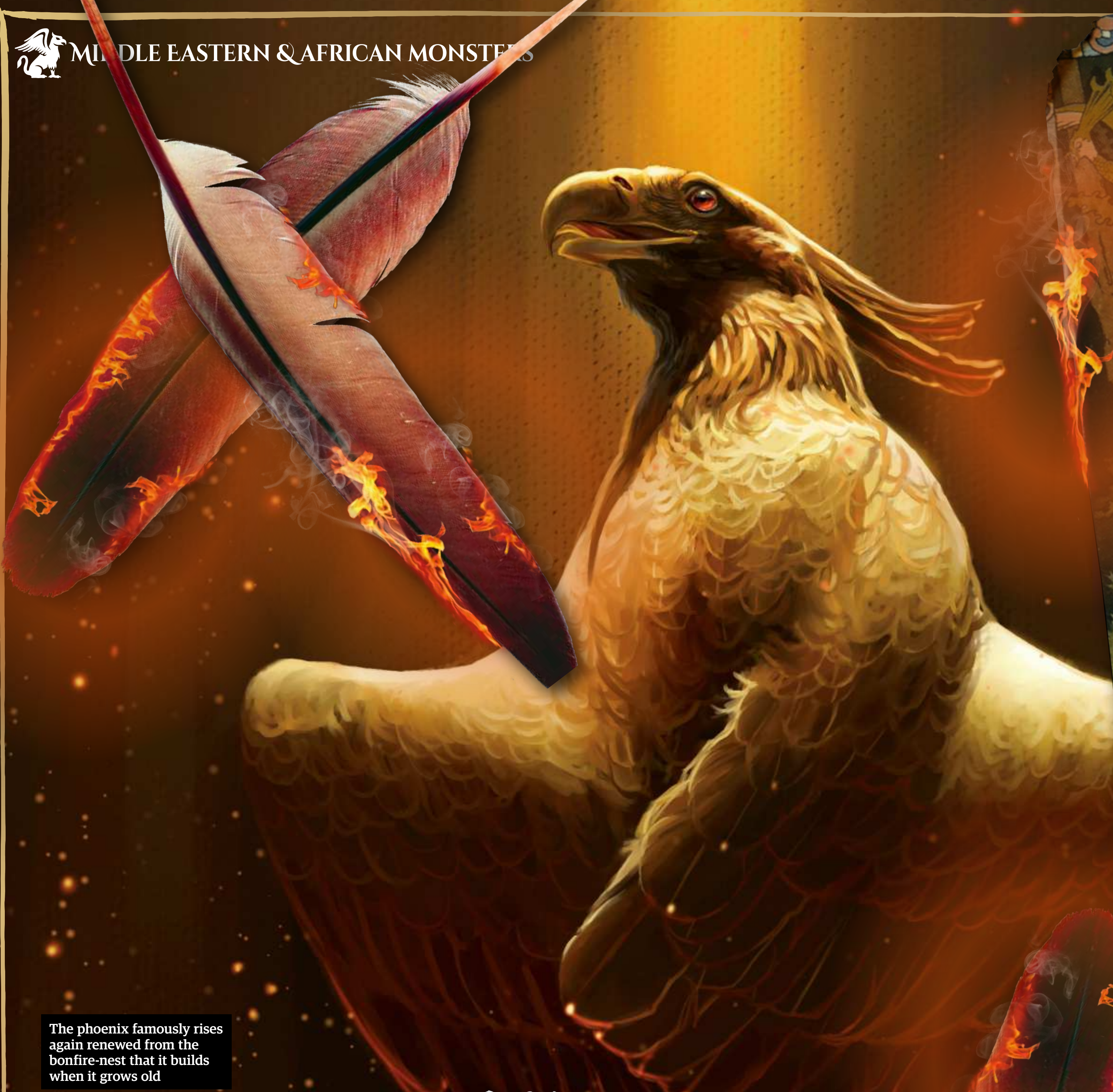
While the Greek Sphinx is the most famous version of this creature, other cultures had similar mythological beasts. Across Egypt many sphinxes can be found, including the Great Sphinx of Giza. While the Greek Sphinx had a fearsome reputation, in Egypt a Sphinx was closely linked to the gods and pharaohs. Many sphinxes feature the body of a lion with the head of a pharaoh, wearing the pharaonic headdress. By linking themselves with a lion the pharaohs were linking themselves with the lion goddess Sekhmet. The Egyptian Sphinx was a projection of the pharaoh's power, both physical and divine.

Other cultures and mythologies have also adopted the Sphinx. The Greek Sphinx was an individual but other mythologies incorporated many sphinxes. In South-East Asia lions with human heads can be found in secular and religious settings. The Sphinx-like purushamriga found in South India are said to remove the sins of those entering a temple as they go inside.

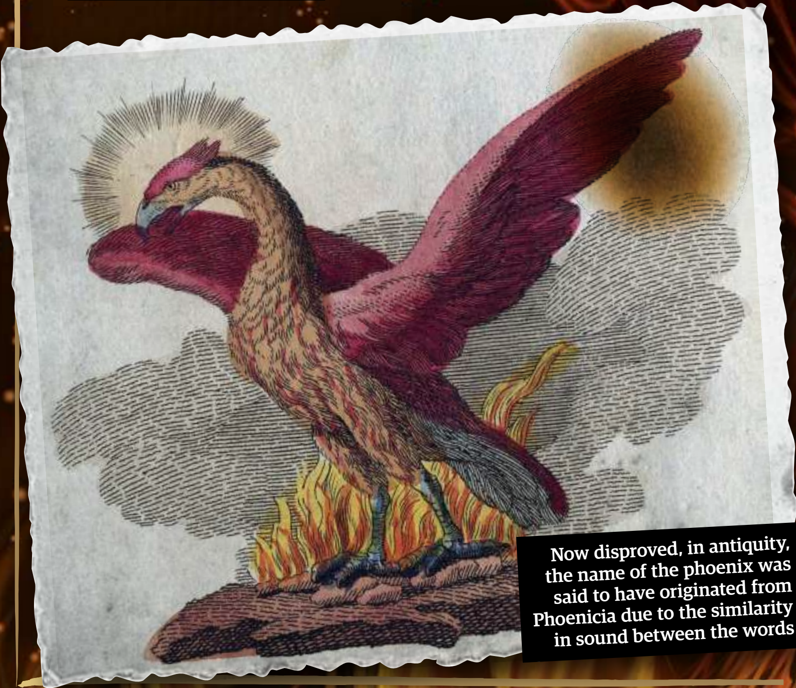


The Great Sphinx of Giza has fascinated visitors to Egypt from antiquity to today and much remains mysterious about its construction

© Wiki: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Oppermann Collection



The phoenix famously rises again renewed from the bonfire-nest that it builds when it grows old

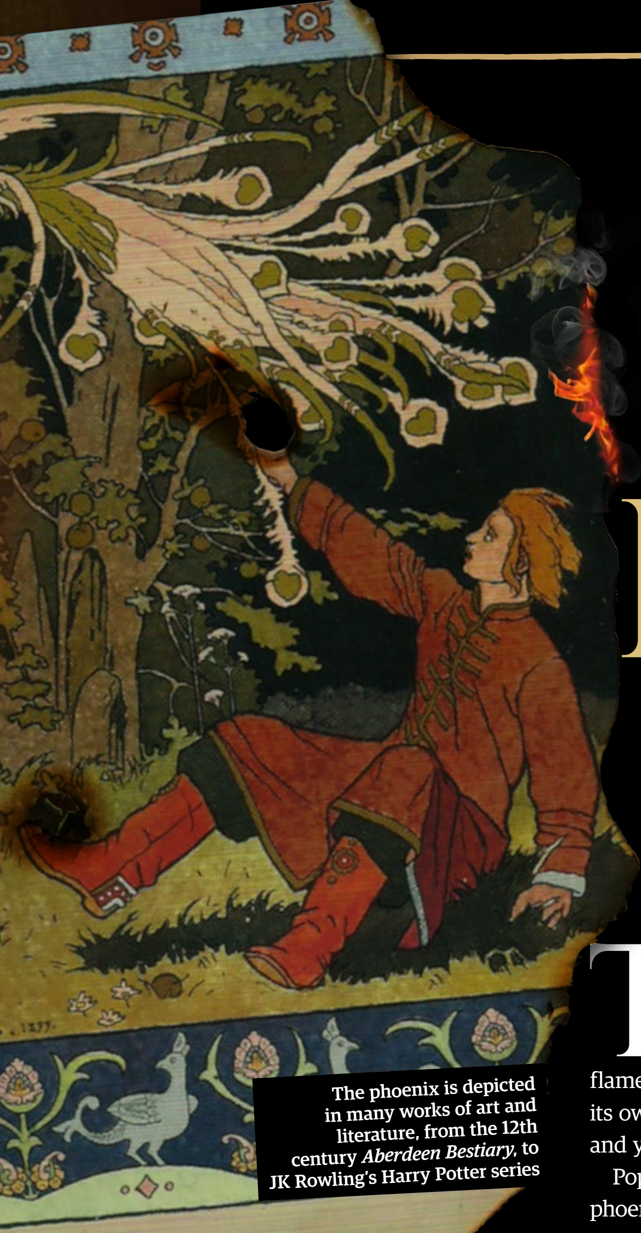


Now disproved, in antiquity, the name of the phoenix was said to have originated from Phoenicia due to the similarity in sound between the words

THE PHOENIX

The fiery bird that rises from the ashes of its nest-pyre also has a darker side…

Written by Willow Winsham



The phoenix is depicted in many works of art and literature, from the 12th century *Aberdeen Bestiary*, to JK Rowling's Harry Potter series

The phoenix is a legendary bird that has become synonymous with the idea of sacrifice and rebirth. Everyone is familiar with the image of the majestic, flame-coloured phoenix, rising out of the ashes of its own destruction to once again be born anew, and young again.

Popular early Greek ideas surrounding the phoenix suggested that the bird lived for a hardy 500 years before regenerating. It is said that the phoenix, upon realising its days are coming to an end, builds a nest high up in a tall tree. Within this nest, it constructs its own funeral pyre, before settling down to await the inevitable. The heatwave of the phoenix's own body sets the dry twigs alight, and the bird fans the flames with its wings, aiding in its own destruction and, therefore, its own rebirth. There are more mundane versions, where the phoenix dies, rots, and then is born again.

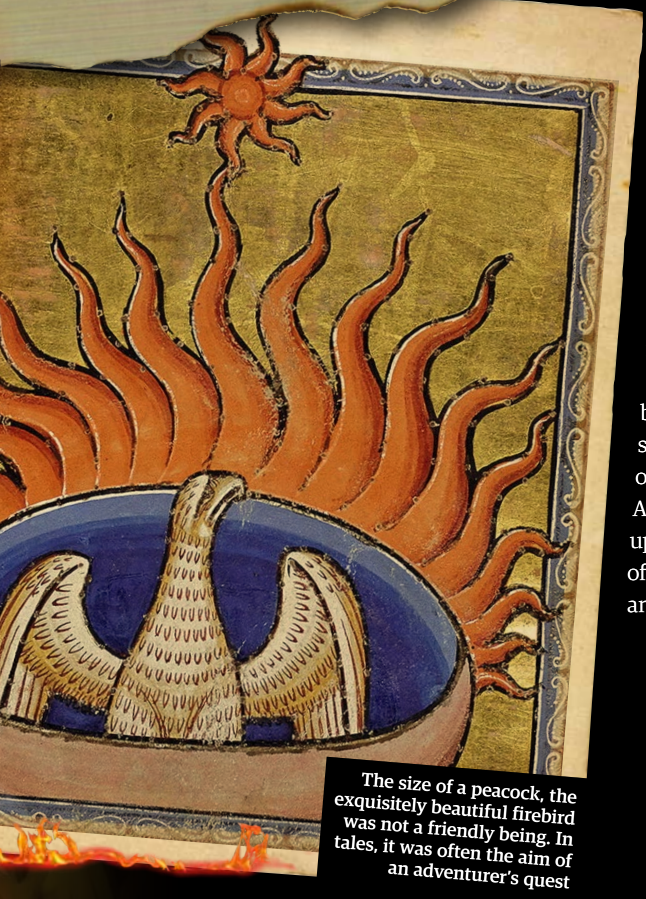
The phoenix is generally described as being the size of a large bird of prey, but in some reports it is suggested to be the size of an ostrich, or, in some cases, even larger. Although its striking appearance is agreed upon, there is debate regarding the colouring of the phoenix: combinations of red and gold are popular, but it has also been described as similar in colouring to a peacock. According to the Jewish Kabbalah, the phoenix earned the distinction of being the only creature within the Garden of Eden that resisted eating the forbidden fruit that caused the Fall. The reward the phoenix received from God for this was a double-edged sword: immortality, but at a painful price, as it is consumed by the flames from which it is reborn. Indeed, the phoenix has come to symbolise renewal and rebirth in general. In Christianity, this fantastical bird is seen as an allegory for the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Due to the vibrant colours of this fantastic bird and the flames that consume it, it is hardly surprising to find the phoenix linked to the sun throughout folklore, and early images of the fabled bird have a sun-like halo.

In Slavic mythology, the firebird is a counterpart to the mighty phoenix. Glowing brightly with fire-like feathers, this magical but dangerous creature could, as shown by many tales, be a portent of doom. It's often the object of quests, typically after being almost caught while stealing apples.

Another, more malevolent connotation for the phoenix is in the demon named Phenex. Appearing in the guise of the fiery bird, he hopes to return to Heaven, using a sweet, child-like voice in an attempt to beguile those who attempt to banish him.

> "The phoenix symbolises death and rebirth, resurrection, time, holiness, and the transmigration of the soul"



The size of a peacock, the exquisitely beautiful firebird was not a friendly being. In tales, it was often the aim of an adventurer's quest

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THE MYTHICAL ROC

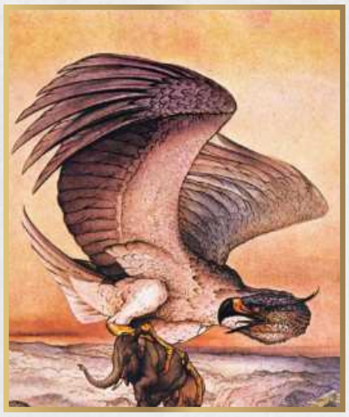
Hailing from Arabian and Persian fairy tales, mentions of this mythical creature span centuries

Written by Dee Dee Chainey

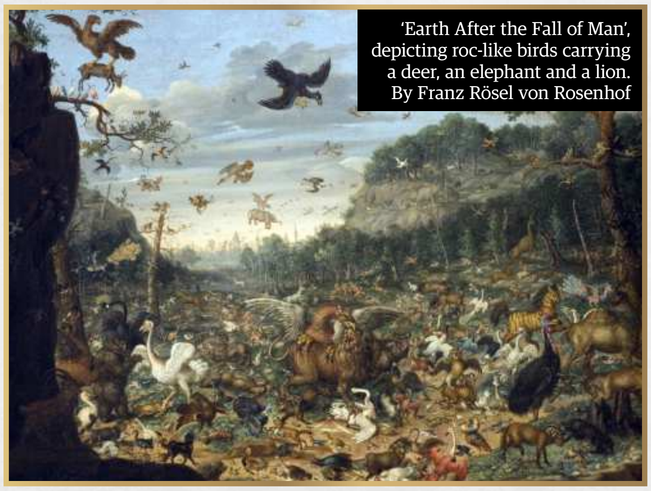
Known by a variety of names, from rukk to rukh, rokh and ruc, some have speculated this mystical bird originated in two Sanskrit epics of ancient India: the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. They say the bird comes from the tale of Garuda, a legendary bird-like creature, who carries off an elephant that had been battling a crocodile in these stories. The texts talk of a giant bird with a 48-foot wingspan, whose beating wings raising winds rivalling a cyclone.

Marco Polo, the infamous 13th-century adventurer, gave a very precise description from his own travels: he said the bird could be found in Madagascar and the surrounding islands off the coast of Africa, and resembled a giant eagle, with feathers twelve paces long. His story tells how Kublai Khan, ruler of the Mongol Empire, sent servants to Madagascar who brought a gigantic feather with them on their return – though many suggest this was a raphia palm frond. Marco Polo himself recounted the idea that the gargantuan bird preys on elephants, tearing them from the earth, only to drop them from a great height to kill them, returning to earth to feast upon the carcass. Other tales say it carries off humans, tearing them to pieces, and carrying them back to its nests to feed its young. The roc makes an appearance in tales from *One Thousand and One Nights*, or *The Arabian Nights*, a collection of folk tales compiled in the Islamic Golden Age. *The Second Voyage of Sindbad the Sailor* tells how the adventurer came across a dazzling white ball that was too tall to climb, fifty paces in circumference, and surprisingly smooth to the touch. Realising it was a giant egg, he saw the roc settle on top of it to keep it warm. Cleverly, the sailor wound his turban around the creature's talon, in hope that it would fly him away from the remote island that he was stranded on. And this it did, carrying him off to the Valley of Diamonds. Here, Sindbad remembered merchant's tales of collecting the precious stones by throwing chunks of meat over them, which the bird would pick up in its claws. Sindbad prepared his meat, and it happened just as he expected. The bird picked up the meat, and with it the diamonds and the sailor, carrying all off to its nest. Here he was met by a band of merchants, rewarding one with the pick of his treasure, and accompanied them to safety.

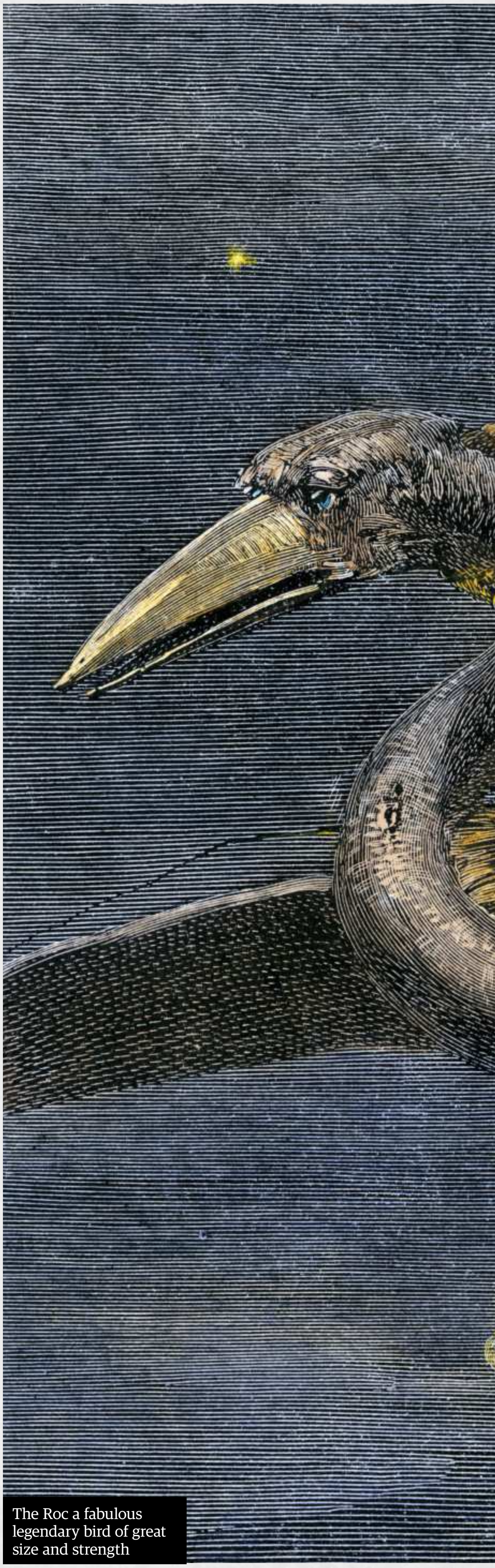
So unless you have a large piece of meat, and a band of trusty merchants to rely on, you'd better watch out for the roc!



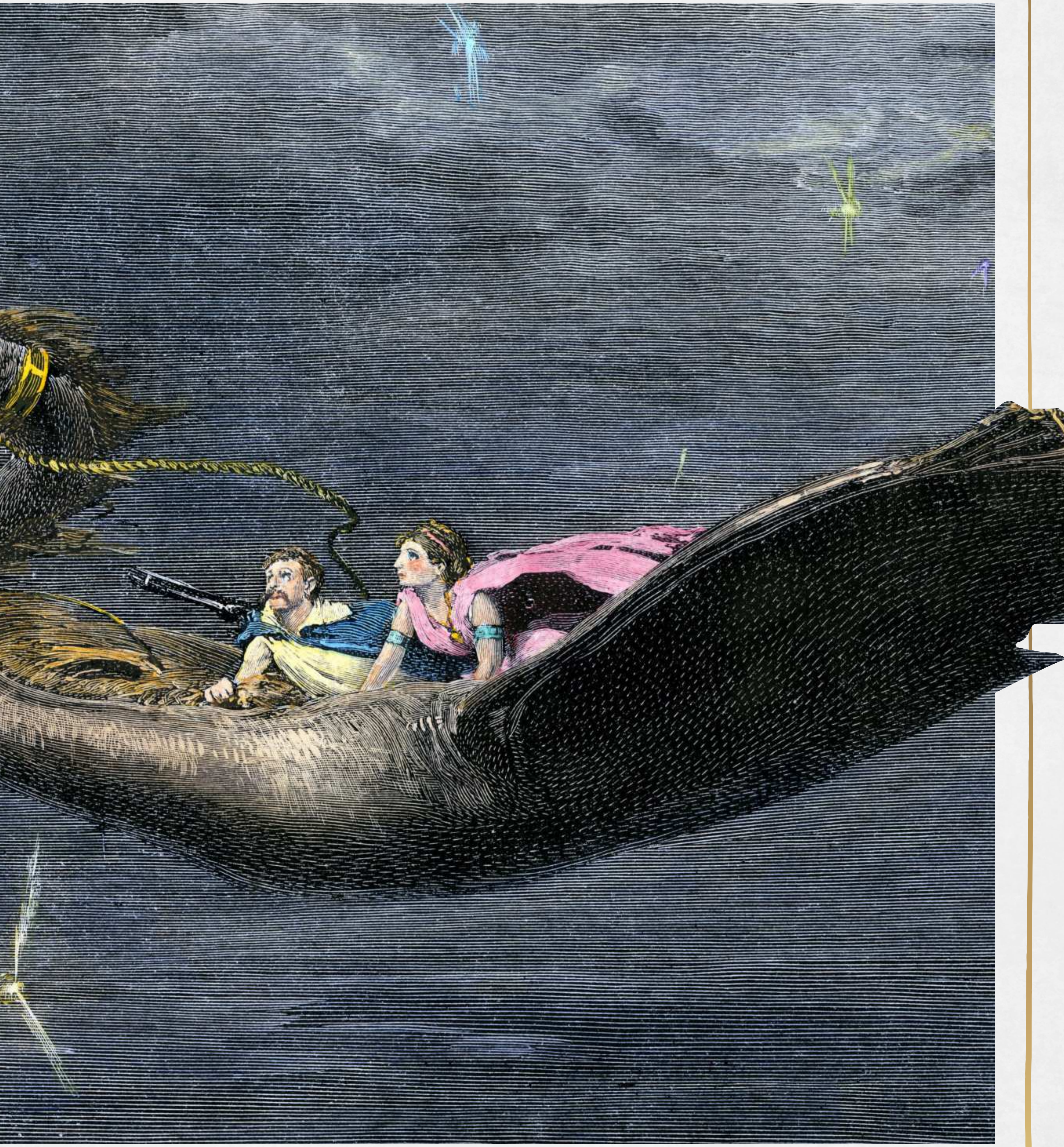
Here, the Roc is depicted in *The Second Voyage of Sindbad the Sailor* in *The Arabian Nights*, by Charles Maurice Detmold



'Earth After the Fall of Man', depicting roc-like birds carrying a deer, an elephant and a lion. By Franz Rösel von Rosenhof



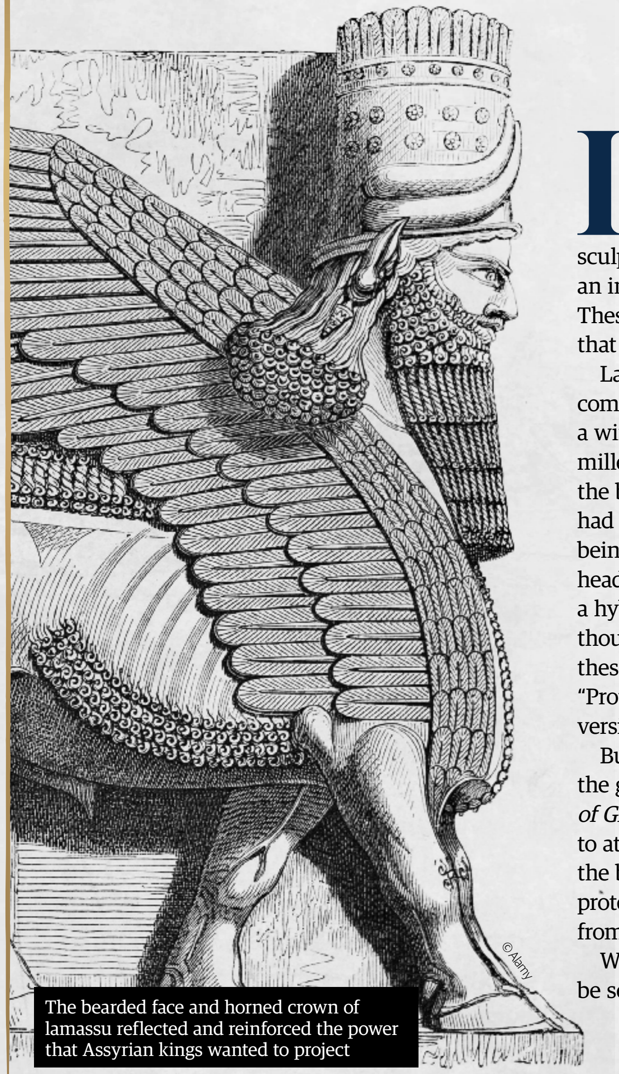
The Roc a fabulous legendary bird of great size and strength



LAMASSU AND SHEDU

As the messengers of the gods and protective spirits of ancient Mesopotamia, lamassu and shedu mixed animal with human, standing outside the natural world

Written by Ben Gazur


© Alamy

The bearded face and horned crown of lamassu reflected and reinforced the power that Assyrian kings wanted to project

In the ruins of the ancient Assyrian capital Ninevah, 40 monumental statues of winged bulls have been unearthed. Across Mesopotamia scores more of these sculptures have been found and they played an important role in Neo-Assyrian cultural life. These colossal figures were often set up as pairs that guarded the gateways into cities and palaces.

Lamassu originated as a goddess shown, in common with most Mesopotamian gods, as a winged human. First seen in the mid-2nd millennium BCE she bore a horned tiara. By the beginning of the 1st millennium Lamma had transformed into a lamassu – a hybrid being of a winged bull or lion with a human head. Somehow this female deity had become a hybrid demon sporting an impressive beard, though with the same horned crown. Most of these winged bulls are called lamassu (meaning "Protective Spirit"), though sometimes male versions are called shedu.

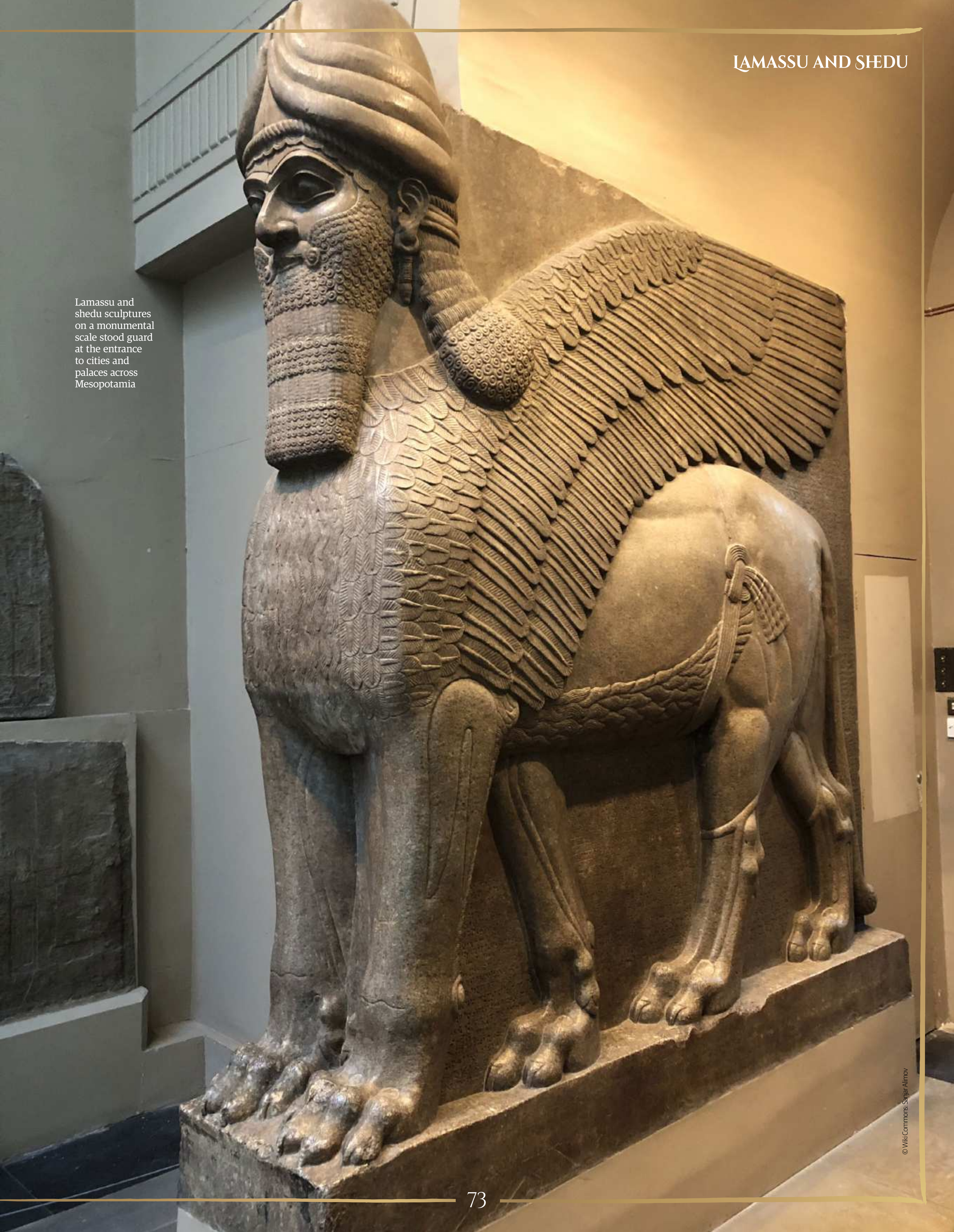
Bulls were figures of strength and ones that the gods would sometimes employ. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh* a monstrous 'Bull of Heaven' is sent to attack Gilgamesh. In the figures of lamassu the bull's divine strength was thought of as protective. The statues at gates warded off evil from entering.

When shown in relief carvings lamassu can be seen guarding over people, armies, and fleets of ships. Even those without palaces to protect might bring the lamassu's powers into their own home by burying an engraved image of the deity beneath the threshold to their house.

Lamassu statues often show them with five legs but this may be an iconographic quirk rather than one of anatomy. Viewed from the front the statues appear to be standing solidly with two legs visible but seen from the side they look to be striding forward on four legs. Only when viewed in three-quarters profile does the odd number of legs appear.

After the death of Ashurbanipal in 631 BCE the appearance of lamassu almost completely disappears. It was only with the later Persian Empire that lamassu began to be depicted again. Rather than being an active attempt to use them as apotropaic guardians it seems the Persians were using Neo-Assyrian imagery to hark back to the glory days of the mighty kings of the past.

It has been suggested that the Cherubim of the Old Testament may be derived from the images of lamassu. The *Book of Ezekiel* describes the Cherubim as hybrids having a human face, an ox face, and the face of a lion. In *Exodus* we are told that the Ark of the Covenant was decorated with Cherubim with their wings spread. Just as lamassu protected the thrones of the kings of Assyria so the Cherubim may have guarded access to God.



Lamassu and shedu sculptures on a monumental scale stood guard at the entrance to cities and palaces across Mesopotamia

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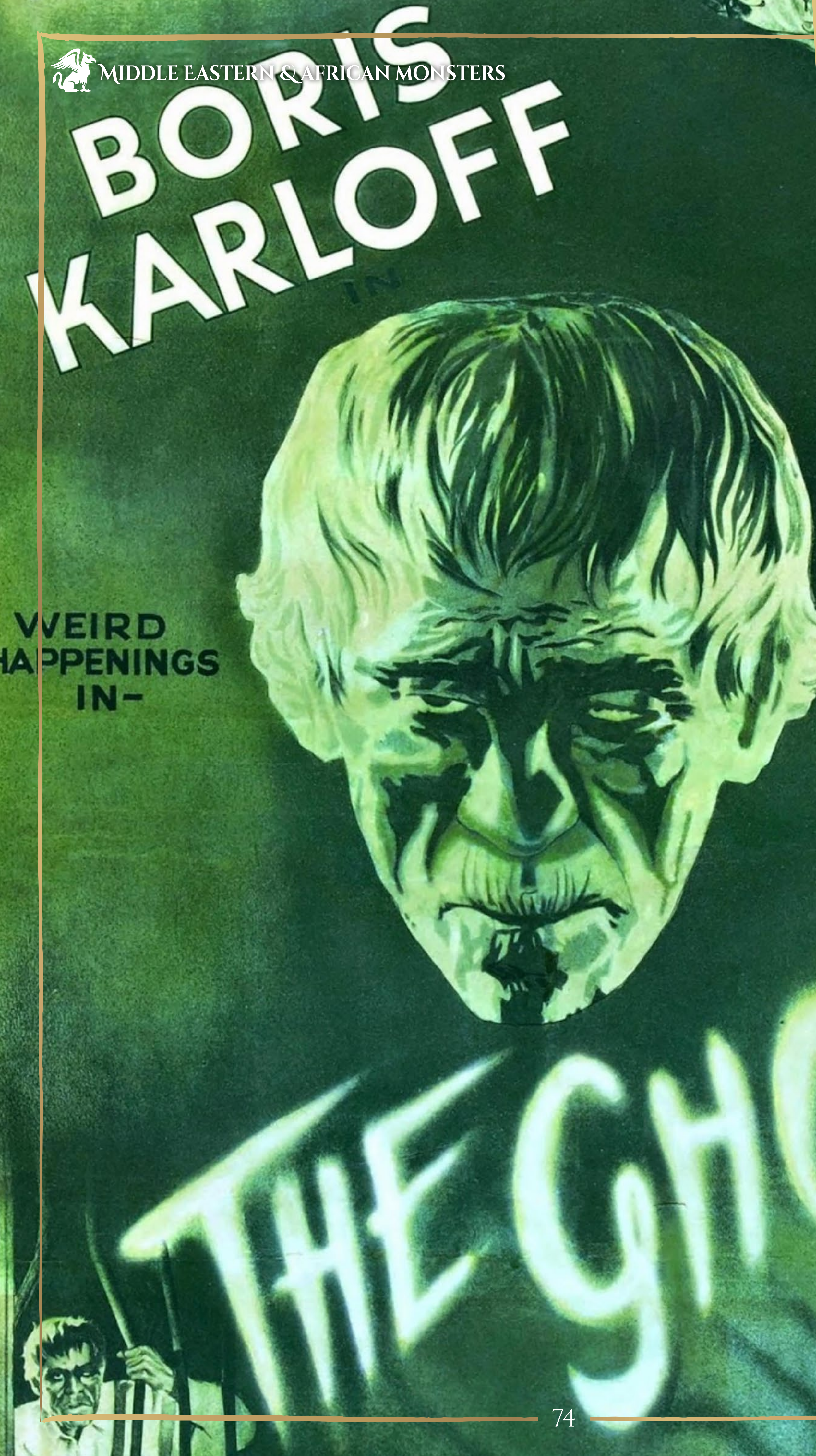
Although often conflated with ghosts, ghouls are horrifying supernatural creatures in their own right


BORIS KARLOFF
IN
WEIRD
APPENINGS
IN–
A
HOUSE OF
MYSTERY
THE GHOUL

Ghouls make frequent appearances in books and films, including this chilling 1933 horror film starring Boris Karloff

GHASTLY SHAPE SHIFTING GHOULS

First encountered in Arabic folklore, ghouls are accursed beings doomed to live in deserted cemeteries and feast upon the flesh of the dead

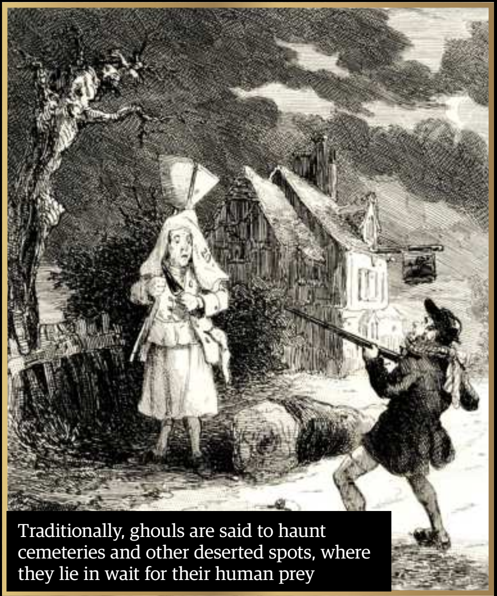
Written by Melanie Clegg

Although often conflated with ghosts, ghouls are in fact distinct supernatural beings in their own right and have their origins in Arabic folklore, where they are described as either lurking around cemeteries, where they gorge on the flesh of the recently dead or inhabiting deserted buildings or deserts, where they trap and feast upon unwary travellers - thus giving rise to their name ghul, or ghulah for female ghouls,, which means 'to seize' in Arabic. According to some sources, there are hideous female ghouls who assume an attractive human form in order to lure men to their lair, where they devour them, while other ghouls prefer to take the form of animals, particularly hyenas, in order to lead their prey astray in the desert, after which they assume the shape of their most recent victim.

The worst ghoul of all was said to be Ghul-e-Biyaban, who roamed the deserts of Afghanistan in search of prey. Meanwhile, according to Islamic theology, ghouls were originally devils called shayatin who discovered a way to secretly access the heavens in order to eavesdrop upon the holy and were punished for this blasphemy with insanity and disfigurement, which inevitably forced them to take refuge in dark and abandoned places, where they took their revenge upon both the living and the dead.

Ghouls remained virtually unknown outside the east until the early 18th century when the French orientalist Antoine Galland made the first European translation of the Middle Eastern classic, *One Thousand and One Nights*, in which he described hideous creatures that skulked around cemeteries and devoured corpses. It was not until 1786 that the first ghoul appeared in literature, when the writer William Beckford, who was said to be the wealthiest commoner in Britain, published his gothic novel, *Vathek*, which was inspired by his passionate interest in Arabic history and folklore. Ghouls have made several appearances in books and popular culture since Beckford's book made its first appearance, and are generally depicted as hideous, almost zombie like creatures that prey upon the living - either by eating them or, in the case of the hideous skeletal Beldam in Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*, who is clearly inspired by traditional depictions of ghouls, draining the lives of children that they lure away from their parents. Nowadays, the term 'ghoul' is also used more generally to refer to someone who delights in the gruesome, spooky or macabre.

> "The worst ghoul of all was said to be Ghul-e-Biyaban, who roamed the deserts of Afghanistan in search of prey"



Traditionally, ghouls are said to haunt cemeteries and other deserted spots, where they lie in wait for their human prey

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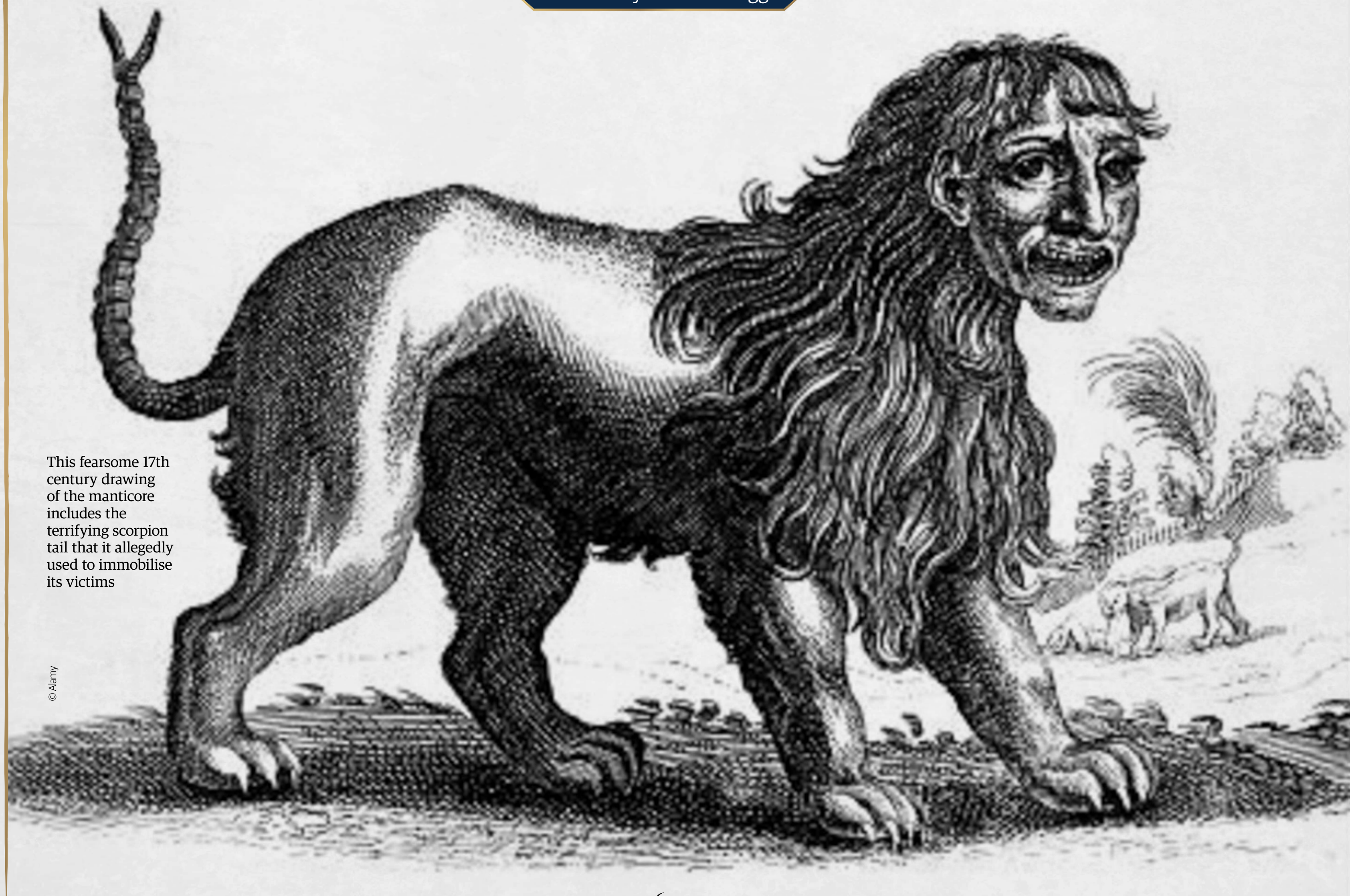
THE MAGNIFICENT MANTICORE

The terrifying man-eating manticore has its basis in ancient Persian myths and would later become a popular theme for Medieval art

Written by Melanie Clegg



This fearsome 17th century drawing of the manticore includes the terrifying scorpion tail that it allegedly used to immobilise its victims

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According to ancient Persian legend, the manticore was a mythical red coloured beast with a human face, three rows of terrifying teeth like those of a shark, body of a lion and a monstrous tail that was either like that of a scorpion or covered in poisonous spikes. Unlike its relatively benign counterpart, the Sphinx, however, the manticore was a fearsome predator that attacked its human prey with the spikes on its tail, which some believed could be shot like arrows, and then dislocated its jaw in order to devour its immobilised victim whole, leaving no trace. It is hardly surprising therefore that its name was derived from 'mardya khowr', the Persian term for 'man eater' which would evolve into the Latin 'mantichora'.

Although the manticore had its origins in Persian mythology, it made its first appearance in European literature in the 4th century BC when the Greek writer Ctesias described this terrifying creature in his now sadly lost book *Indica*, which allegedly described the natural history of India and was also the first source to describe the unicorn. Later, the Roman writer Aelian elaborated on Ctesias' work by writing about the manticore in his book *Characteristics of Animals*, in which he described the beast as being incredibly fast, making a sound that 'is as near as possible to that of a trumpet' and being capable of slaughtering and devouring several men in one attack.

Other notable Roman writers, including Pliny the Elder, later followed suit and elaborated further on the legend of the manticore, which was said to be incredibly ferocious and much feared by the Indian people that it preyed upon.

During the Middle Ages, the manticore made regular appearances in bestiaries - richly illustrated and decorated books describing mythical and real creatures, which were extremely popular in aristocratic circles. This led to the manticore becoming a favourite with artists and sculptors, particularly those tasked with decorating churches and cathedrals, while William Hastings, 1st Baron Hastings, took his interest in the manticore even further in 1470, when he added tusks and made it his official heraldic badge - which was later copied by other influential men, including the infamous Anthony Babington, who was executed for plotting the rescue of Mary Queen of Scots.

> "The manticore was a fearsome predator that attacked its human prey with the spikes on its tail"

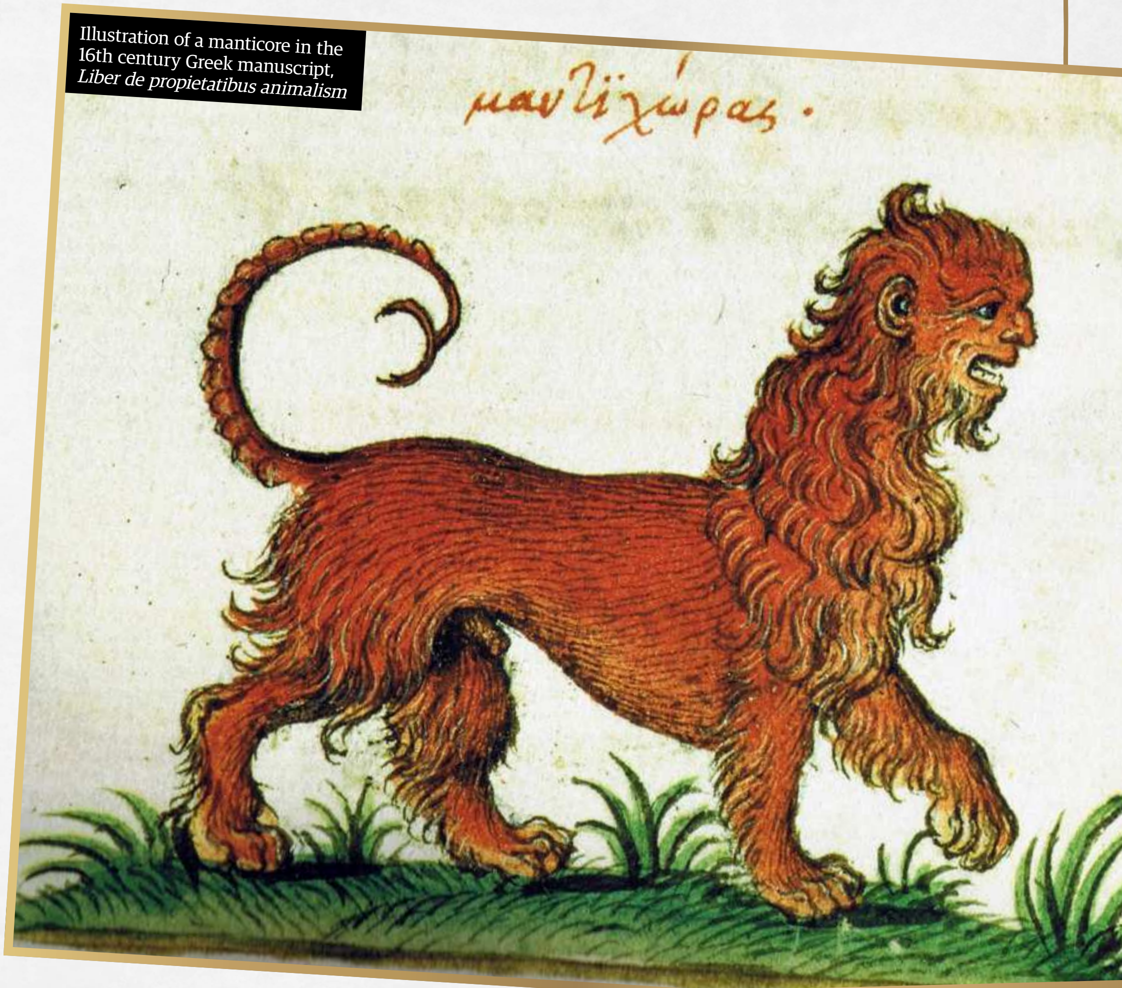
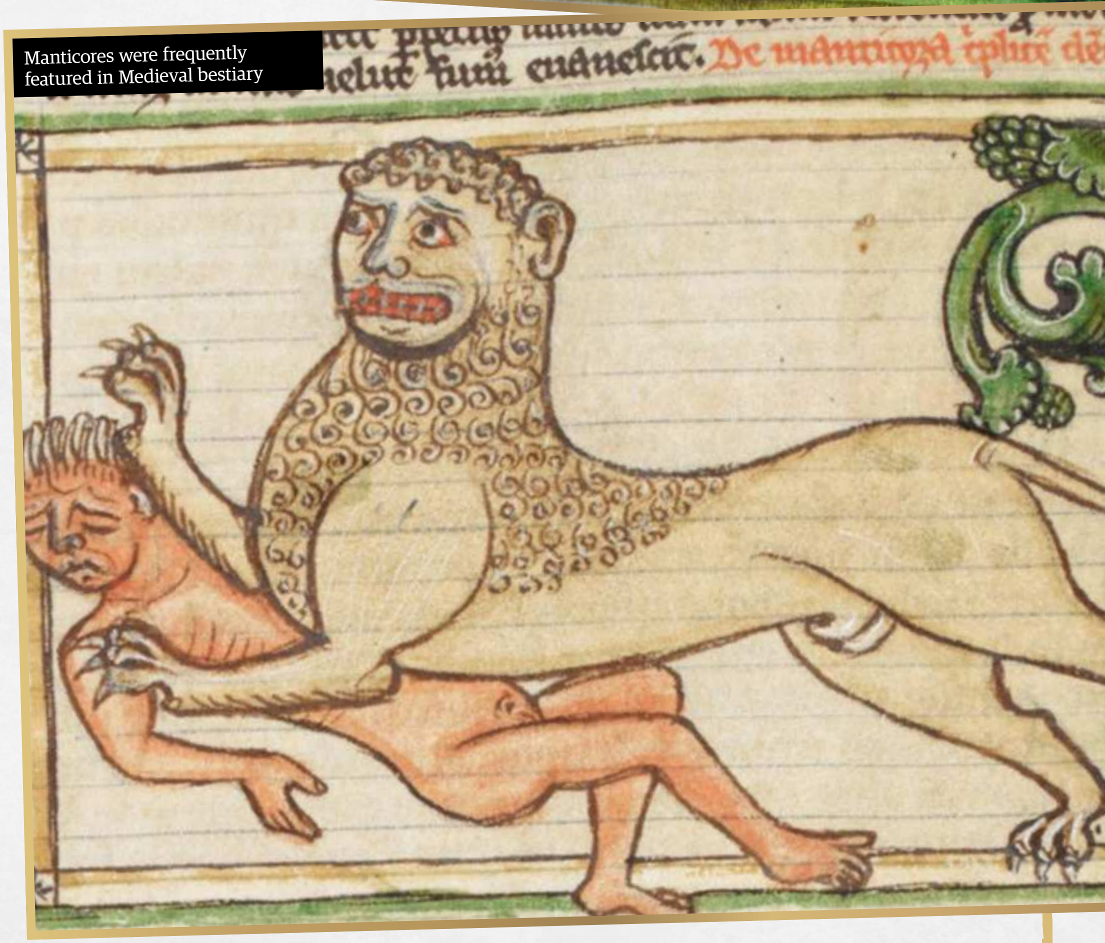
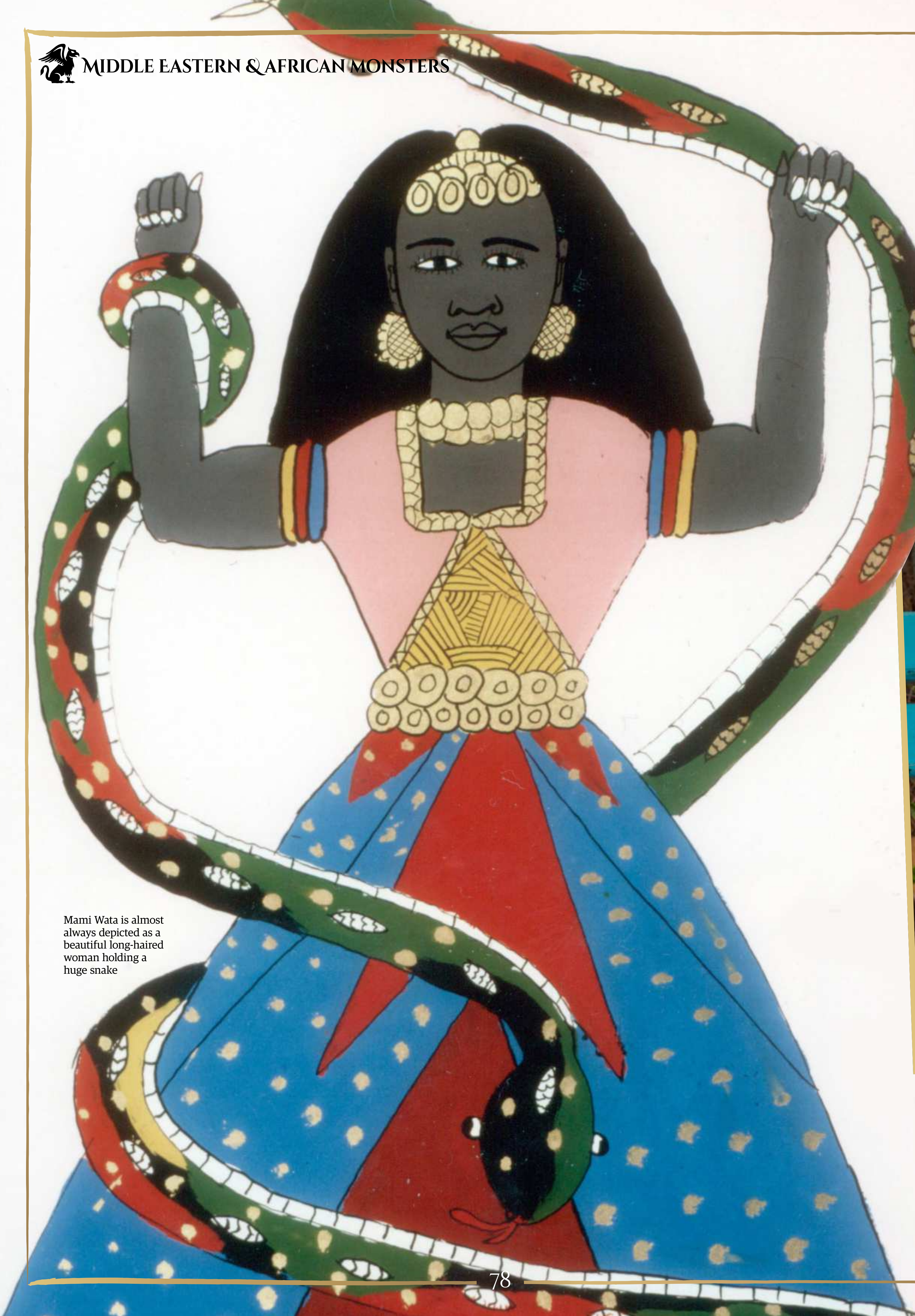


Illustration of a manticore in the 16th century Greek manuscript, *Liber de propietatibus animalism*


Manticores were frequently featured in Medieval bestiary

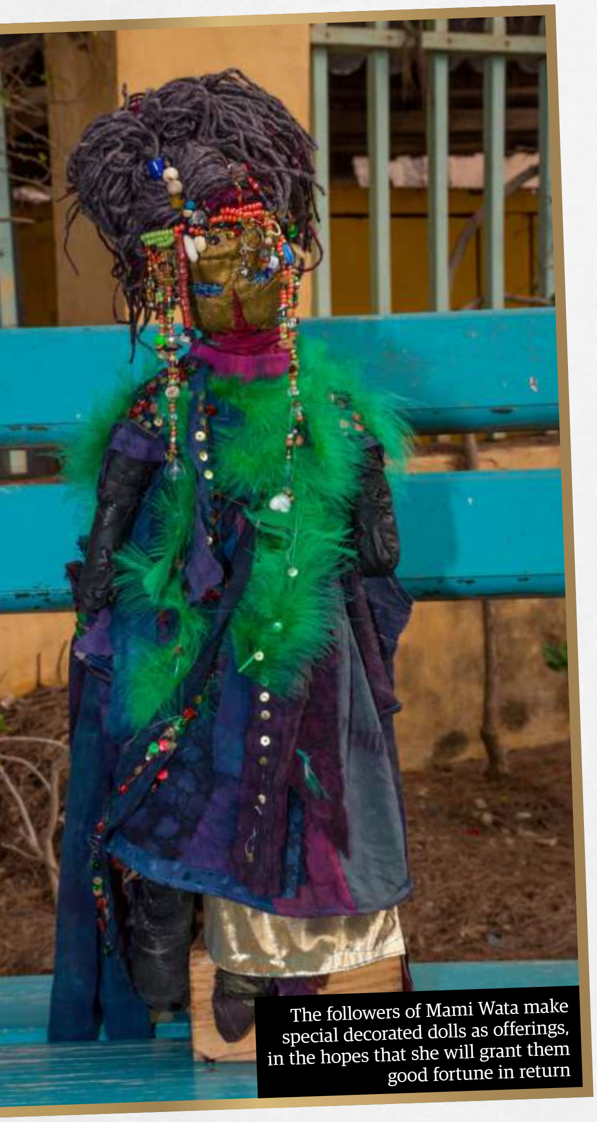


Mami Wata is almost always depicted as a beautiful long-haired woman holding a huge snake

MAMI WATA

The beautiful African mermaid Mama Wata is believed to bestow good fortune on those who worship her

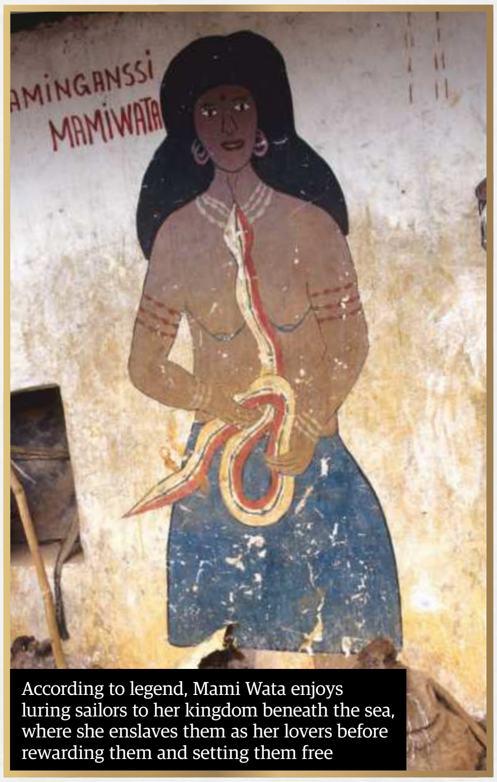
Written by Melanie Clegg



The followers of Mami Wata make special decorated dolls as offerings, in the hopes that she will grant them good fortune in return

Mami Wata, whose name is derived from the pidgin English for Mother Water, is one of the best known deities in Africa and the wider African diaspora, where she is worshipped and revered as a water creature who offers special protection to sailors and all who work and travel on the sea. Often depicted as a mermaid-like beautiful woman with the lower body of a serpent or fish and lovely long black hair, bedecked with pearls, diamonds, gold and snakes, Mami Wata is usually holding a mirror and accompanied by a large serpent that coils around her and nestles its head between her breasts. Although she is obviously in her natural element in the sea, she is also said to frequent busy markets and bars, where she passes unnoticed through the crowds. According to Nigerian tradition, she occasionally seduces unwitting mortal men in the guise of a beautiful woman before revealing her true self and giving them a terrible ultimatum - either they commits themselves entirely to her and are rewarded with wealth beyond their most fevered imaginings or they walk away and she destroys everything that they love. Another, more widespread belief is that she is fond of luring sailors and other unwary travellers to her kingdom beneath the sea where she enchants them and holds them captive for a period of time before returning them unharmed and blessed with good fortune, to the surface.

Despite her reputation as a jealous and demanding lover and her rapacious love of jewels and precious items, Mami Wata is often regarded as a benign force by her followers thanks to her association with health and healing, with many believing that she has the ability to cure various ailments. In some areas, women who are having difficulty conceiving a child call upon Mami Wata for help, although any children who result from her assistance are said to belong to Mami Wata rather than their birth mothers and some may well even become her priests after being raised to consider themselves her property. Although many of her followers prefer to worship her alone, others do so in a group led by priests, who encourage them to dance until they have entered a trance-like state, at which point Mami Wata, who has been attracted to the gathering by offerings of luxurious goods like perfume, jewellery and chocolate, is said to possess their spirit and grant them good fortune.



According to legend, Mami Wata enjoys luring sailors to her kingdom beneath the sea, where she enslaves them as her lovers before rewarding them and setting them free

> "Although she is obviously in her natural element in the sea, she is also said to frequent busy markets and bars, where she passes unnoticed through the crowds"

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POPO BAWA AND THE EVIL SHETANI

These wicked spirits are as feared today in East Africa as they were during pre-Islamic times

Written by Joanna Elphick

Popo Bawa, meaning 'bat-wing' in Swahili, is one of many malevolent spirits or shetani, thought to terrorise East Africa and Tanzania in particular. The name describes the menacing shadow cast by the spirit as it hunts at night, although, like many other shetani, Popo Bawa is in fact a shape shifter, able to morph into other animal forms or even take on a deformed human appearance rather than remain as a monstrous bat.

Whilst many shetani can be traced back over a thousand years, Popo Bawa is a 20th century monster. Earliest written records date back to 1965 but the creature was generally accepted across the 1970s, many believing it to be a vengeful jinn that became demonic and escaped his sheikh master.

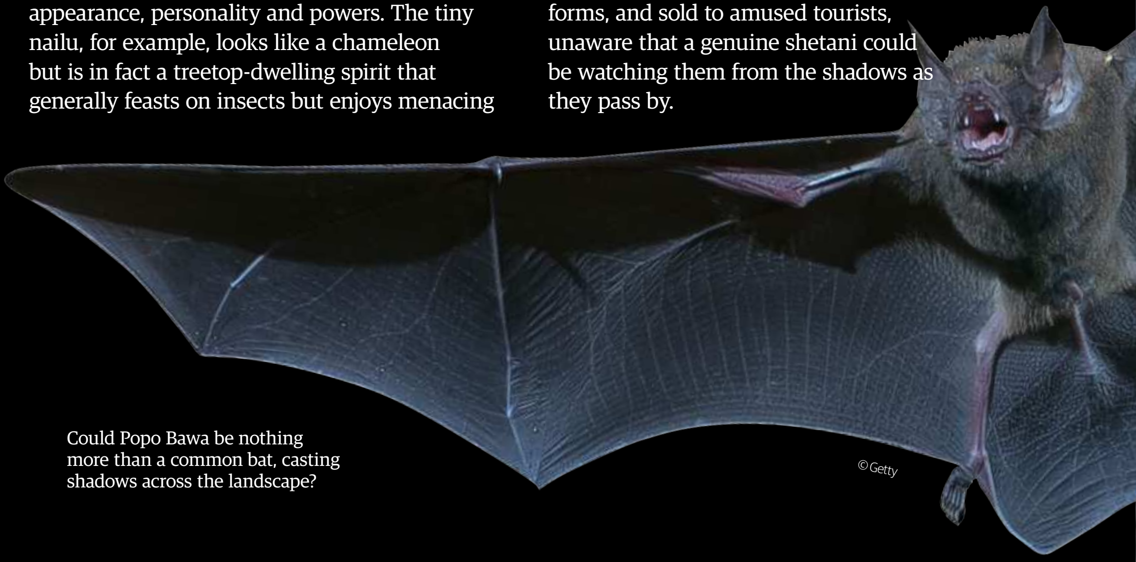
Further outbreaks of spirit attacks have been recorded ever since, the most recent being in 2007 in Dar es Salaam. As night falls, the villagers prepare to protect their homes during shetani attacks by lighting fires and keeping together with their neighbours until morning. Ever watchful, they check for the smell of sulphur, a sure sign that Popo Bawa is on the prowl. No one is safe from this voracious creature that will attack men, women and children with equal ferocity.

For some, the confrontation is aimed at the homestead, similar to a poltergeist manifestation which can be spiteful in nature, but for others, the attack becomes a violent assault against people themselves.

The term 'shetani', meaning spirit, covers a multitude of mostly malignant creatures that form evil tribes, each with their own distinct appearance, personality and powers. The tiny nailu, for example, looks like a chameleon but is in fact a treetop-dwelling spirit that generally feasts on insects but enjoys menacing the villagers wherever possible. The ukunduka is a far more dangerous spirit, using sexual intercourse to feed and flourish. Although vastly different, all can be said to appear distorted and grotesque in some way, either displaying warped human features or deformed animal characteristics.

Across East Africa, people describe the shetani with asymmetrical features, often with one eye or a single leg, crooked mouth or, in the case of animal-like spirits, exceptionally large claws or kinked wings. Detailed sculptures are carved by the local villagers in African black wood, depicting their unnatural forms, and sold to amused tourists, unaware that a genuine shetani could be watching them from the shadows as they pass by.

> "Although vastly different, all can be said to appear distorted and grotesque in some way"



Could Popo Bawa be nothing more than a common bat, casting shadows across the landscape?

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Tourists buy carved sculptures of sacred gods and evil spirits, unaware of their true meaning and importance to the villagers

A dancer wearing a tokoloshe mask. It's believed that the tokoloshe turn invisible and torment people while they sleep

GOODNIGHT, AND BEWARE THE TOKOLOSHE

Indigenous South African villages were tormented by a mysterious phenomena of healthy people dying in their sleep. Were the malevolent tokoloshe to blame?

Written by Poppy-Jay Palmer

Many of the characters that appear in South African mythology are divine and enchanting, like Mujajim, the rain goddess, and Leza, the sky god and creator spirit, who once lived on Earth to teach humans different arts before ascending to his home in the sky. Others, however, are downright terrifying. Take the tokoloshe, for instance.

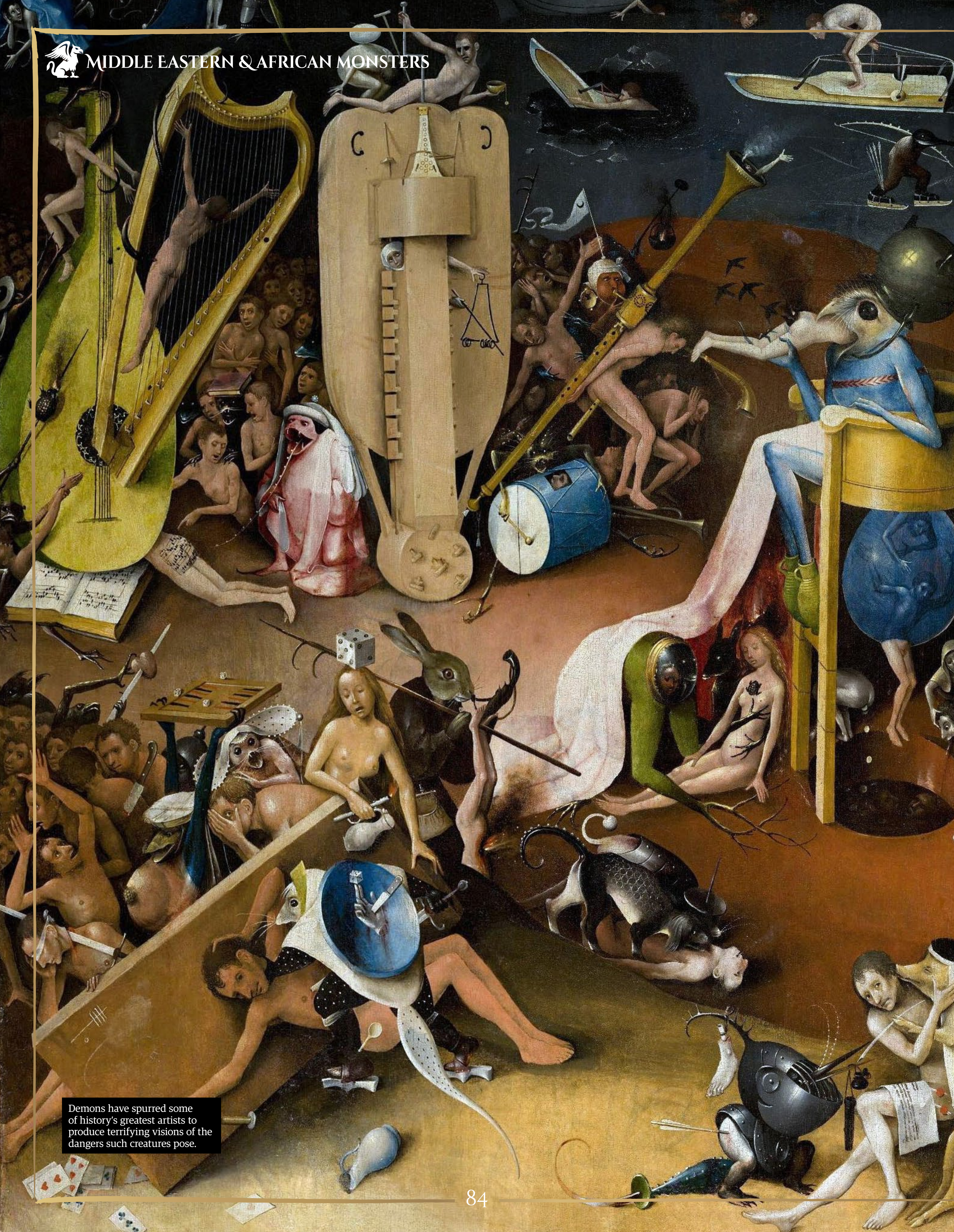
Originating from indigenous South African folklore, particularly Zulu and Xhosa mythology, the tokoloshe are small but they're far from harmless. Different people describe them in different ways; some believe them to be humanoid creatures akin to gremlins or brownies, while others describe them as more primate in nature. Appearance aside, everyone can agree on one thing: you don't want to mess with the tokoloshe.

As water sprites, the creatures are believed to have the ability to become invisible by drinking water or swallowing a stone. Once concealed from the human eye, they creep into people's houses and attack them in their sleep. Sometimes they'd merely scare their victims, leaving them with nothing but a chilling tale to share the next day. But other times they'd wrap their long, bony fingers around their victims' necks and strangle them to death. In fact, they were part of the reason many indigenous South African people used to put bricks under their beds' legs to raise them off the floor – tokoloshe are malevolent, but they can't climb very high.

Back when the majority of people in the culture lived in rondavels, traditional cylindrical huts made of stone, sand, soil and other natural materials, an alarming number of apparently healthy people used to mysteriously die in the night. Sometimes, entire families. Tales of the tokoloshe were created to explain the phenomena. However, there's also a theory that sleeping on the floor close to cosy fires in the rondavels all night may have caused a depletion in oxygen levels and instead filled victims' homes with carbon dioxide.

The tokoloshe don't select their victims themselves. According to myth, they're called upon by witches to wreak havoc in a community. The witches control the little creatures by cutting the hair out of their eyes so they can see and feeding them curdled milk. If a community or household continues to be terrorised, there's only one way to be rid of the tokoloshe: they must call for a sangoma, a Zulu witch doctor, who will use muti, a kind of traditional magic, to exorcise the area of tokoloshe.

> "As water sprites, the creatures are believed to have the ability to become invisible by drinking water or swallowing a stone"



Demons have spurred some of history's greatest artists to produce terrifying visions of the dangers such creatures pose.

DEMONS FROM HELL

From earliest times many have feared that the world was populated by demons ready to attack humans and destroy them – either physically or spiritually

Written by Ben Gazur

Demons have long haunted humanity. These supernatural beings exist to torment people both in life and even after death. We all know them as something to fear but the definition of a demon is as twisty and mutable as demons are themselves. To examine demons we have to travel into the deep past.

THE HAUNTED PAST

The word demon is derived from the Greek word 'daimon'. To an ancient Greek there was nothing particularly fearsome about a daimon – in fact they could be handy to have around. Hesiod, a poet writing in the 7th century BCE, described how Zeus turned the first generation of humans into daimons.

"They are the good, the earthbound, the guardians of mortal humans,
They guard acts of justice and they guard against wretched acts of evil."

Pindar wrote about the glorious victors of the Olympic games and spoke of daimons that watched over people's fates from their birth. The philosopher Socrates claimed that he had a daimon who spoke to him. This daimon would often tell Socrates not to do something if it would be impious.

In a certain sense daimons were a form of lesser god. They came to be personifications of abstract concepts. If you were lucky you might be visited by Euphrosyne, the spirit of Good Cheer. Of course if good things can be personified then so too can the bad things in life. The most feared daimon was Hybris – punisher of outrageous arrogance. Greek daimons could separated into the good spirits called eudaimons while their evil counterparts were the kakodaimons.

The Romans adopted many of these Greek daimons into their own pantheon but they also added spirits of their own. To the Roman mind any part of the natural world might be inhabited by a spirit known as a Genius Locii. The Genii of the Emperors would later be worshipped as gods in their own right – which some Christians found sacrilegious to the point of blasphemy. This sped the transformation of daimons and genii into our modern understanding of demons.

Older traditions of demons existed before the Greeks and Romans though. In Egypt the cosmos was divided between the ordered and the chaotic. The gods and pharaohs were on the side of order, but they were in constant battle with beings who sought to return the universe to disorder. The Egyptians had no word that corresponds directly to demon, but it is hard not to see these spirits who lived in the dark, smelled foul, and harmed humans, as demonic.

In the funerary texts of ancient Egypt there was a class of demon who guarded the portals of the afterlife. They were armed with weapons and pieced together from ferocious animals like hippopotami, scorpions, and crocodiles. They had names like 'Swallower of Sinners'. Their vivid physical descriptions helped the deceased to avoid them as they travelled through the afterlife.

The ancient Mesopotamians were also acutely aware of demons that could harm them. One inscription lists a few of them:

"The wicked Utukku who slays man alive on the plain. The wicked Alû who covers man like a garment. The wicked Etimmu, the wicked Gallû, who bind the body. The Lamashtu, the Labasu, who cause disease in the body."

These malevolent demons took monstrous forms such as humanoid figures with wings, claws, and razor sharp beaks. This imagery found across the Middle East would be influential for centuries on how people imagined demons.

DEMONS OF THE BIBLE

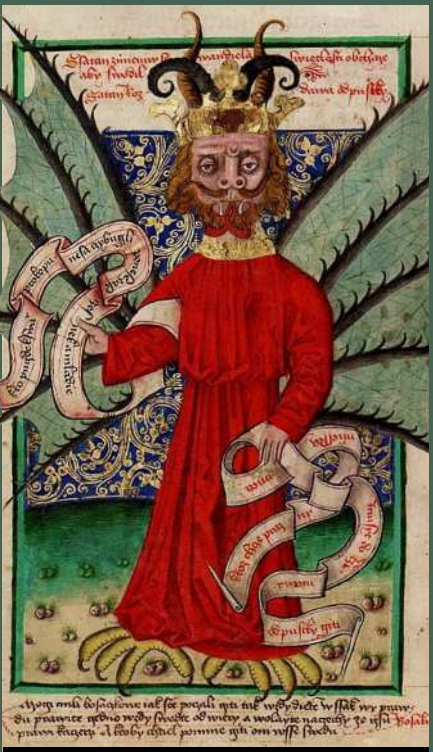
The names and concept of demons passed from Mesopotamia into Jewish literature. The Akkadian term Lilitu means 'spirit' and some see this as the source of Lilith, one of the oldest demons in Jewish tradition. Lilith was supposedly the first wife of Adam but when she refused to serve Adam she was replaced with the more compliant Eve. Lilith came to be one of the most feared demons in the Abrahamic tradition but far from the only one.

"They sacrificed unto demons, not to God." *The Book of Deuteronomy* describes as demons the old gods of Mesopotamia but it is out of the Bible that our modern conception of demons developed. The Old Testament actually has relatively few references to demons though. When God goes into battle in the *Book of Habakkuk* he is preceded by Reseph and Dever – Plague and Pestilence.

In the *Book of Tobit* the demon Asmodeus kills seven husbands of Sarah on their wedding nights. It is only when help is prayed for that the

> "The *Book of Deuteronomy* describes as demons the old gods of Mesopotamia but it is out of the Bible that our modern conception of demons developed"

SATAN – PRINCE OF HELL

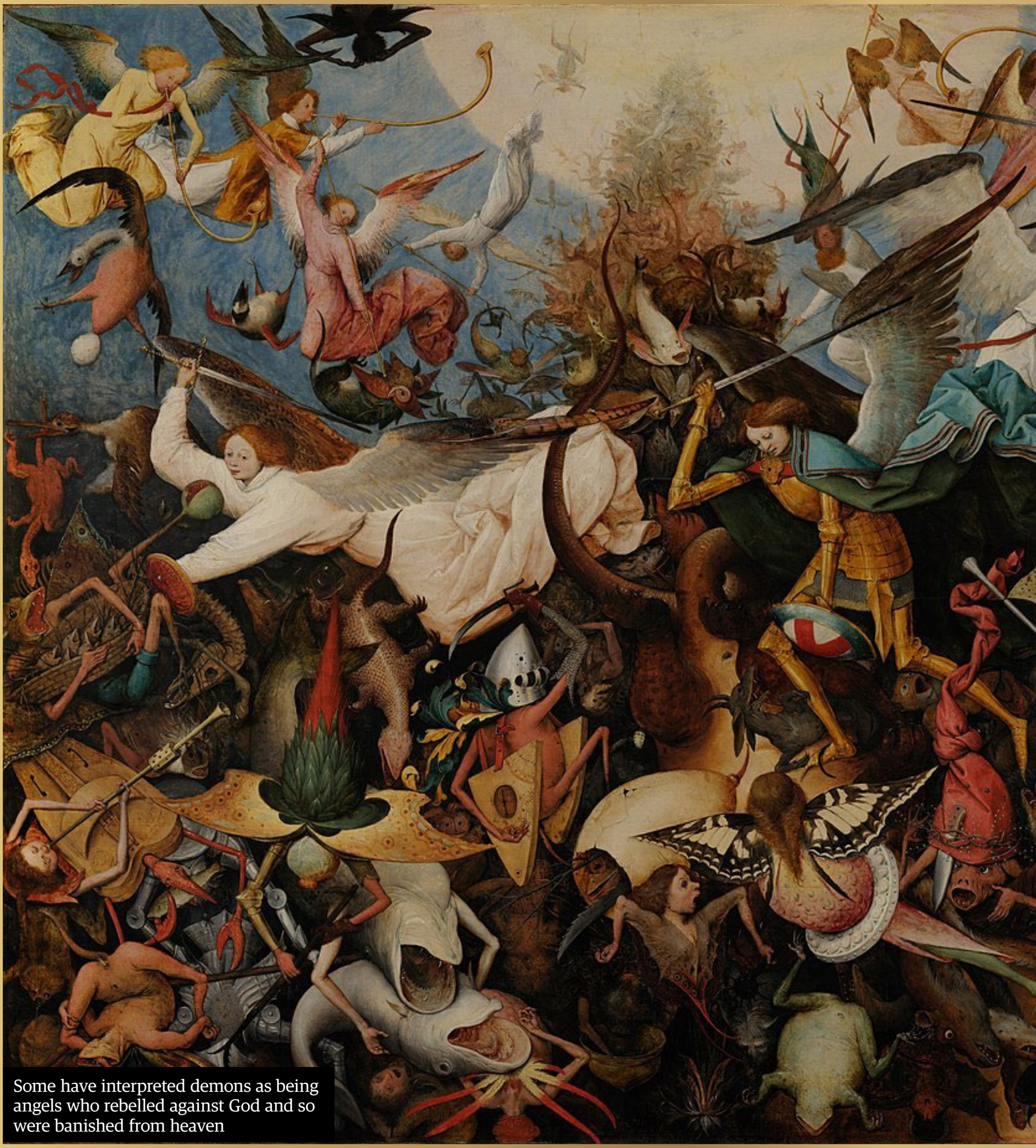


Our current conception of Satan borrows from many sources and not all religions agree on his importance, role, or even existence

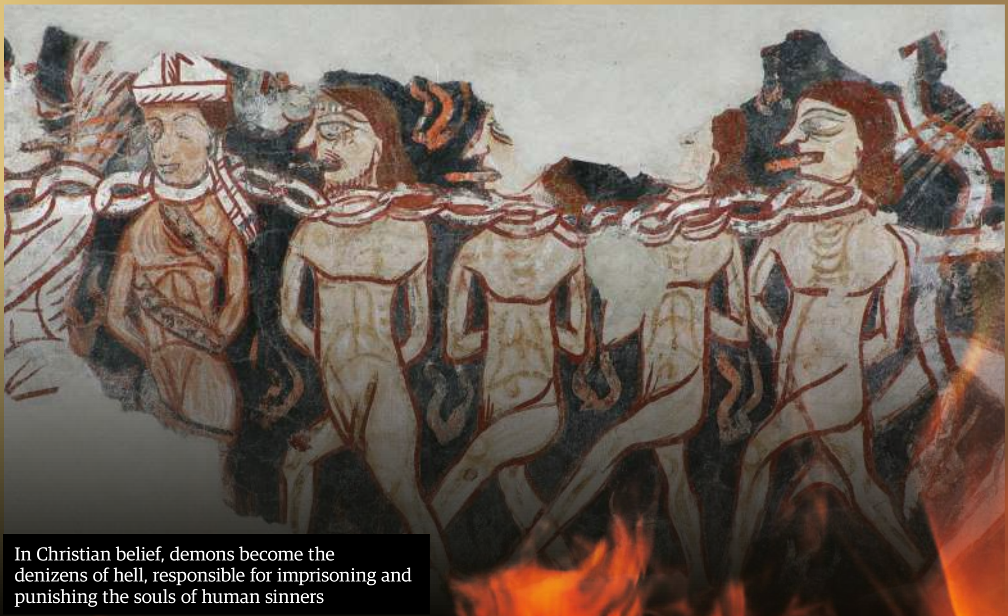
The Devil is one of the most recognisable figures in Western culture yet as a character in religious texts he barely makes any appearances. One text from Ugarit describes how the great god El was once frightened by a demon:

'The "creeper" approached him, The one having two horns and a tail. He floundered in his own faeces and urine, El collapsed like the dead.' This 'creeper,' a horned demon with a tail seems very like the Devil as conceived of in later Christian thought, though the Devil never has such a strong effect on the Abrahamic God.

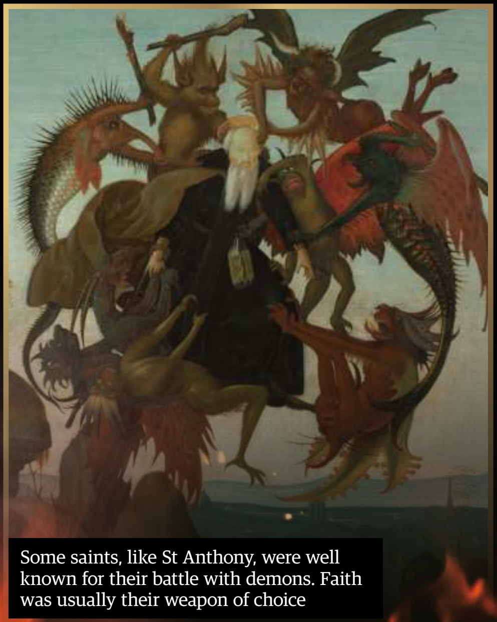
God in the Hebrew Testament seems to have used Satan for his own purposes. In the *Book of Job* a character called "the satan" visits God and the two decide to test God's faithful servant Job by afflicting him with various catastrophes and illnesses. The role of the satan here is as a tester - only later would a singular Satan become the prince of demons. As the leader of demonic hordes the Devil featured heavily in later Christian stories where he was seen to trick the unwary into giving up their souls. But conversely, many tales delighted in recording the ways that saints had outwitted Satan.



Some have interpreted demons as being angels who rebelled against God and so were banished from heaven



In Christian belief, demons become the denizens of hell, responsible for imprisoning and punishing the souls of human sinners



Some saints, like St Anthony, were well known for their battle with demons. Faith was usually their weapon of choice

“Demonology developed throughout the early Medieval period all the way to the 19th century”

angel Raphael is sent to drive away the demon. In Talmudic tradition Asmodeus is given an equally vicious wife called Agrath bat Mahalath who is queen of the demons and commands 10,000 lesser demons who do her bidding.

In the New Testament demons make startling appearances and Jesus’ ability to command them is taken as a sign of divinity by his followers, and a sign of evil by his opponents. In the *Gospel of Matthew* we hear how “Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see.” But “when the Pharisees heard this, they said, ‘It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons.’”

Despite the opposition of some, Jesus appears to have continued his campaign against demons. In the region of the Gerasenes he met a “demon-possessed man”. Jesus asked the Demon’s name. “My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” The demons are then thrown out of the man into a passing herd of 2,000 pigs who then cast themselves into the sea. Jesus empowered his disciples to also cast out demons. We are told “they drove out many demons” which suggests the world is riddled with demons. Since the Bible declared demons to be real, Christian thinkers in the West for hundreds of years had no doubt about their existence.

FALLEN BEINGS

There is a problem lurking at the heart of all monotheistic religions. Known as the problem of evil, it asks how evil can exist if there is an all powerful and benevolent deity running the universe. One way of solving the problem of evil has been to lay the blame for bad things at the feet of a vast variety of demons. Where did the demons come from though, if God did not create evil beings? Demons, it has been proposed, are the victims of their own fall from grace.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the Earth, and then he made angels. According to the *Book of Enoch* among these angels were 200 Watchers. They saw saw humans and lusted after them. The fruit of their couplings were giants. Among the Watchers one called “Azâzêl taught men to make swords, and knives, and shields, and breastplates.” According to this text God ascribes all sin to the action of Azâzêl.

While none of the central texts of the Abrahamic faiths use the phrase ‘Fallen Angel’ it has become a common belief that all demons were angels who have sinned and been thrown out of heaven. Several times in the New Testament there are references to Satan having fallen from heaven. In Islam too we find Iblis, an angel who refuses to bow down to Adam and is made to tempt humans to test their faith.

MODERN DEMONS

With many religions agreeing that demons had real existence it became imperative for the faithful to understand who these demons were and how to avoid their clutches.

Demonology developed throughout the early Medieval period all the way to the 19th century. In one early text, *The Testament of Solomon*, we find that each demon is ruled by an angel. If we can learn the name of that angel we can control the demon under it. King Solomon had a magical ring to help him fight with demons - most afflicted by demons lacked any magical jewellery to aid them in their struggle.

Simple faith however was held up by many as sufficient to battle demons. Stories of the Desert Fathers, ascetics who retreated to deserts to avoid sin, are full of demonic attacks. St Anthony in particular was famous for struggling against hosts of demons until God drove them out.

In the late Medieval period the number of demons exploded. Alphonso de Spina calculated that there were 133,316,666 demons created from fallen angels. With this number of demons available it was inevitable that demons would become specialised. Some targeted specific professions, like Titivillus who was blamed by scribes for sneaking errors into their writing. Others were more generic, like the Incubi and Succubi that seduced people into lustful sins.

Discussions of the types and powers of demons occupied many great minds. Even kings could be haunted by demons. James I of England (James VI of Scotland) wrote a book called *Daemonologie* to help his subjects better understand the risks they faced from demonic forces. Other thinkers sought out demons on purpose, however. In Renaissance magic, necromancy was used to call upon demons to reveal knowledge to them.

Today few believe in demons as powers in themselves that are constantly trying to attack people and lure them towards hell. But everyone speaks of their ‘personal demons’ to describe struggles with unwanted aspects of our personalities or behaviour.

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ASIAN MONSTERS

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Whether revered guardians or nefarious trickster spirits, the alluring fox spirits of Japan have enthralled people for centuries, and still do

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The jiangshi, one of the most feared supernatural creatures in China, are known as hopping zombies due to their peculiar stiff-legged gait

Korean dragons, or yongs, are much like Chinese dragons in appearance but are far less friendly, and are often associated with water and agriculture

ASIAN MONSTERS

NIGHTMARES & FAIRY TALES

All across Asia, from China and Japan to India and the Philippines, monsters and mythical creatures have dominated folklore for centuries...

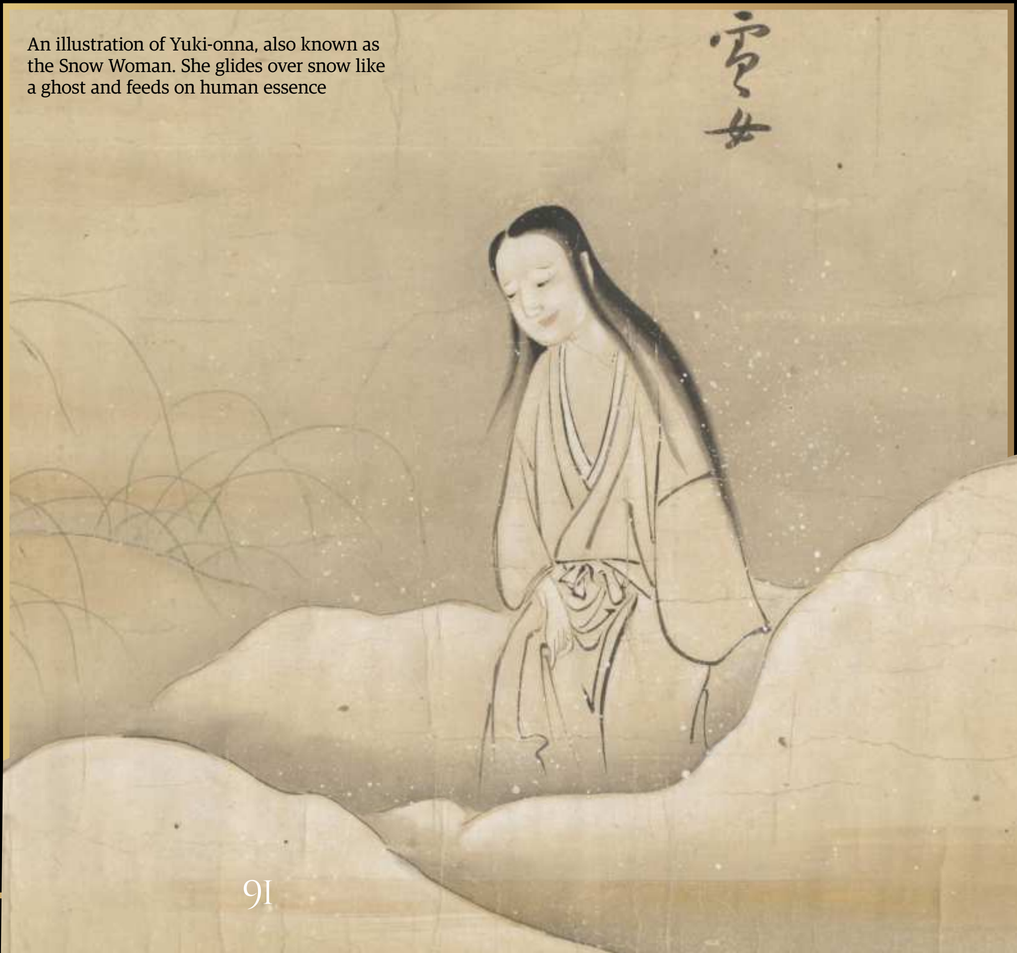
Written by Poppy-Jay Palmer

Asian folklore is filled with monsters and mythical creatures that perfectly complement its rich history and complex cultures. Some take the form of heroes and deities, while others haunt the nightmares of their believers. From the fearsome yeti of the Himalayas and the ferocious rakshasa, the mysterious qilin to the serpentine Hindu and Buddhist naga and the Japanese semi-deity known as the tengu, the following pages take a deeper look at the sometimes terrifying monsters of Asian mythology.

When examining cultures with plentiful myths and legends, you'd be hard pressed finding one that rivals that of China. Many people from the Western world associate Chinese folklore with dragons, especially in the context of ancient China and Chinese New Year, but when it comes to monsters and beasts, the country's mythology has far more to offer.

As in most cultures, some Chinese monsters bring nightmares and others bring good fortune, but the famed pixui keeps company with the latter group. Usually depicted as a variation of winged lion with its wings folded into its body and antlers on its head, the pixui is one of the most auspicious creatures in Chinese mythology. These days, they can usually be found carved into small jade pendants swinging from rearview mirrors, or worn as lucky jewellery, but in ancient times majestic statues of the creatures stood at city and palace gates as noble guardians. In the oldest stories, the pixui was portrayed as a ferocious beast recruited by the legendary Yellow Emperor to join a special unit of his army, alongside other apex predators, in the war against the Yan Emperor. In classical texts, the creatures are even used as metaphors for powerful armies. But their terrifying image has changed over time; according to folklore, the pixui ended up violating the decorum of the heavenly court by defecating on the floor. As punishment, the Jade Emperor sealed their anuses shut so they could eat but never poop. Instead of waging war, they now go around devouring evil spirits to convert their essence into gold and treasure that they hold in their bellies, symbolising wealth and good fortune. Another of China's more famous beasts is the nine-tailed fox, or hulijing, a spirit and skilled shape shifter. The earliest legends surrounding the spirits tell of clever foxes that resided in the mountains as they practiced Daoist magic in an attempt to gain immortality. As they gained more wisdom, the foxes grew more tails. After a thousand years, the most skilled foxes grew nine tails and finally became immortal. While shape shifting, they could take on the shape of any human, be it man, woman or child, although their bushy tails often gave away their disguises. In contrast to the pixui, nine-tailed foxes were at first believed to bring good fortune, but by the Song Dynasty people saw them as demonic creatures. Tales of the fox spirit have developed and spread over time, with different stories being told in Japanese and Korean cultures.

Mythology to the east of China is equally rich, with Korean folklore featuring just as many unusual characters. Korean mythical creatures


An illustration of Yuki-onna, also known as the Snow Woman. She glides over snow like a ghost and feeds on human essence

have become popular in modern entertainment in recent years, with a number of films and K-dramas incorporating them into storylines. The country's culture is a mixture of several belief systems, including shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism and, since the 1990s, Christianity. However, shamanism's influence has been far more impactful than the rest when it comes to folklore, with tales of supernatural beings and creatures becoming widely known from ancient times to this day.

One of Korea's most well-known creatures is the yong, a fire-breathing beast heavily influenced by the famous Chinese dragon. However, the yong is far less friendly. These benevolent beings are often associated with water and agriculture, bringing clouds and rain in their wake. They're believed to reside in rivers, lakes, oceans and mountain ponds, which they often heat up and use to nest – their eggs require a constant temperature of just-boiling water in order to hatch. In artwork, yongs usually look similar to Chinese dragons. They're long, narrow, and yellow and gold in colour, and are often depicted with four claws on each foot and no spines on their backs. They eat mostly small mammals and use their long bodies like boa constrictors, strangling their prey before swallowing it whole.

Another mainstay monster of Korean mythology is the dokkaebi, also known as the Korean goblin, which can be dated back as far as the Silla era. Unlike the classic monstrous Western goblins, dokkaebi are nature deities or spirits that possess extraordinary powers. They often interact with humans, using their powers to play tricks on evil people and help and reward those they consider to be good. They can also summon objects with the assistance of wooden clubs called dokkaebi bangmani. Dokkaebi differ in appearance from tale to tale, but they're often described wearing hanbok, traditional Korean clothing characterised by its wrapped front top, long high-waisted skirt and vibrant colours.

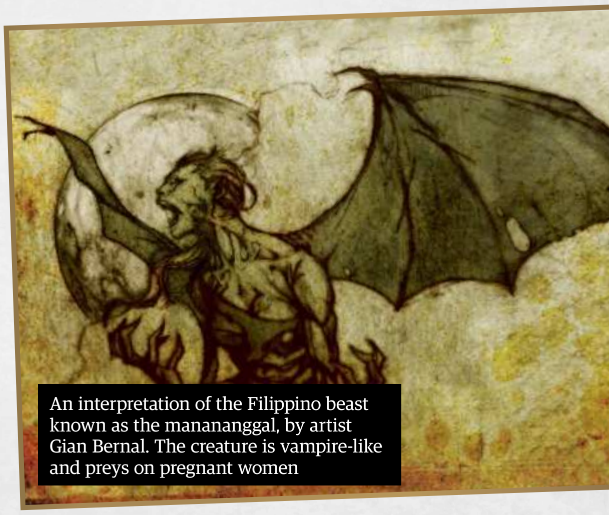
Even further east, across the ocean, lies Japan. The country's fascinating history brings with it complex and colourful folklore, much of which contains an abundance of horrifying magical creatures. Ghosts play an important part in Japanese mythology, and one of the most famous tales is that of Yuki-onna, the Snow Woman. Over the years, the story has been told in many different ways, but Yuki-onna often appears as a deathly pale woman with a white kimono and long black hair. She arrives when snow falls and glides over the icy ground like a ghost. She feeds on human essence, killing her victims by blowing on them and freezing them to death before sucking their souls out through their mouths.

But not all Japanese folklore raises goosebumps. Tales of the korobokkuru, for example, are positively adorable, and originate from the folklore of indigenous Ainu people, native to Hokkaido and northern Japan. Also known as korpokkur, the korobokkuru are a race of tiny people not unlike European fairies. According to legend, they were very skilled at fishing and lived in tiny pits with roofs made of butterbur leaves. They often engaged in trade with the Ainu but they were incredibly shy and, as a result, were never seen by humans. One day, an Ainu man ambushed a korobokkuru, hoping to finally find out what the miniature people looked like. Embarrassed and angry, the korobokkuru fled and none of them were ever seen again.

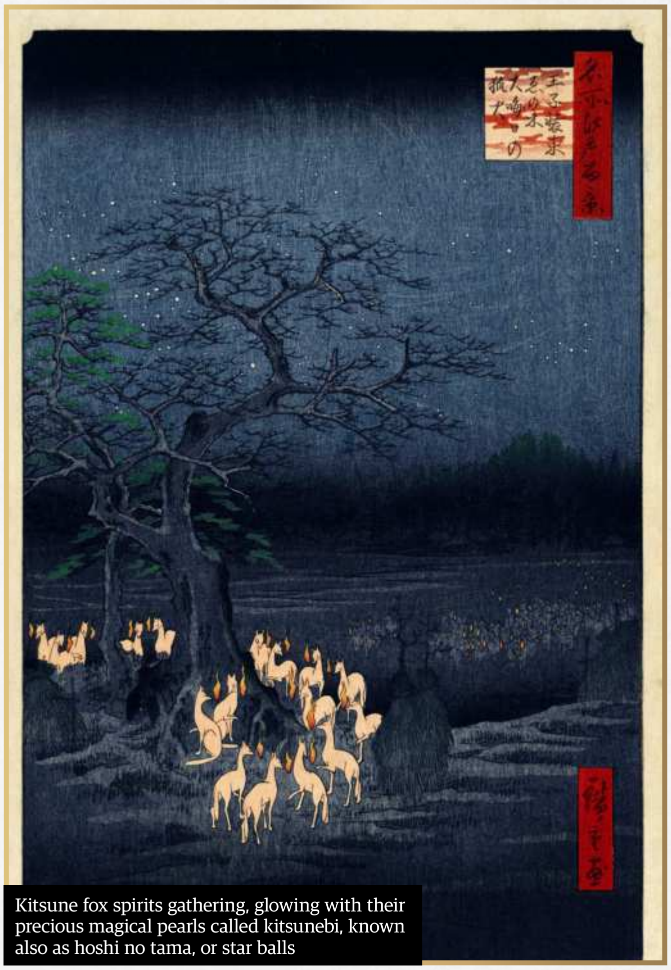
Back on the mainland, many Indian folktales took their roots from Hinduism, and were then passed on to other nations by travellers and nomads. Some of the world's oldest tales of vampires originate in India, like those that tell of the vetala. These fearsome beasts are suspended between life and death, thought to be not at rest having not had proper funeral rites performed for them. They dwell in cemeteries, taking the form of evil spirits as they occupy corpses with the hands and feet turned backwards, and possess an uncanny knowledge of the past, present and future. The vetala use their knowledge to confound humans and kill children and livestock, and occasionally assist evil sorcerers after becoming enslaved by them.

This statue of a pixui stands guard at the Yongning Tomb of the Emperor Wen of the Chen Dynasty in Qixia District, Nanjing, in Jiangsu Province, China

> "The vetala use their knowledge to confound humans and kill children and livestock, and occassionally assist evil sorcerers"



An interpretation of the Filipino beast known as the manananggal, by artist Gian Bernal. The creature is vampire-like and preys on pregnant women



Kitsune fox spirits gathering, glowing with their precious magical pearls called kitsunebi, known also as hoshi no tama, or star balls

With so many complex and varied cultures, tales of majestic and terrifying Asian folkloric monsters have been spread far and wide for centuries, with legends originating from all over the continent. Take the five-foot long Mongolian Death Worm, also known as the allghoi khorkhoi, that resides in the Gobi Desert and spits acid at anyone who crosses its path (at least according to the Gobi Desert's locals that like to share stories of the Death Worm with travellers), or the Phaya Naga, a Laotian dragon and benign deity that supposedly lives in the Mekong River and protects the city of Vientiane. Talk of the Phaya Naga has spread across Southeast Asia, and has become a popular beast of interest in Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam as a result.

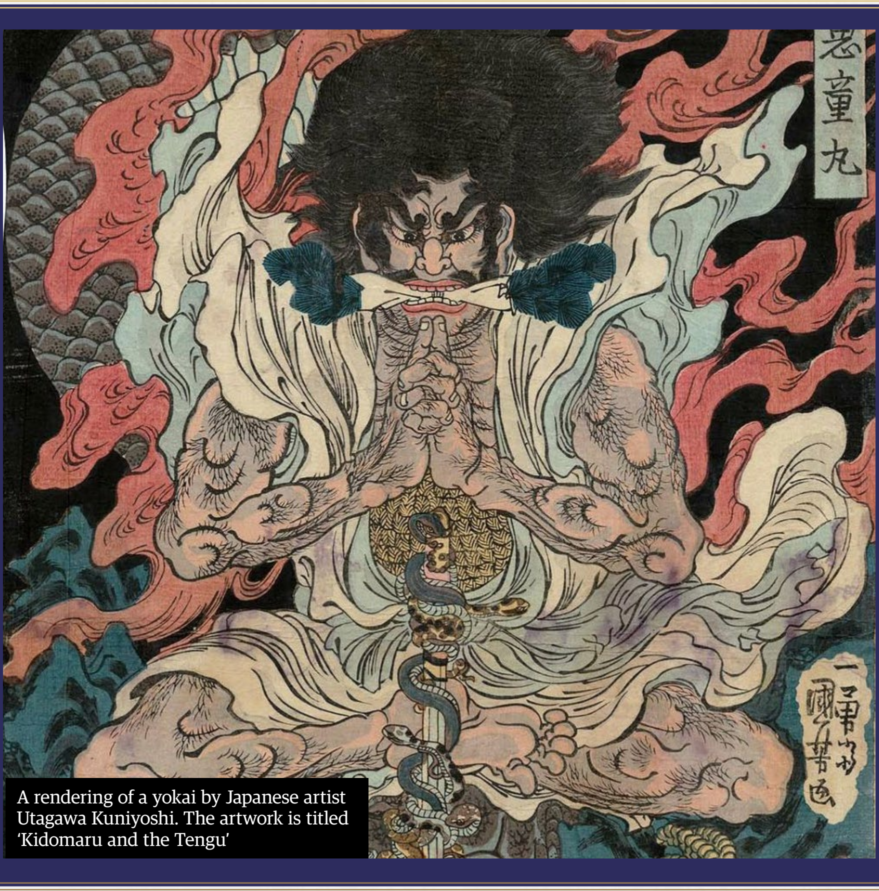
But nothing comes close to the horrifying creatures that hail from the Philippines, like the tikbalang, hellish creatures often referred to as 'demon horses'. They have the head and feet of a horse and the body of a human, and walk upright on freakishly long limbs. They're believed to roam forests, raping women and impregnating them with tikbalang babies. If that isn't enough to keep you up at night, the Philippines is also home to the manananggal, an old but attractive female vampire that preys on pregnant women and uses her tongue to suck the blood of their unborn babies, leaving the children with deformed faces. Before taking flight the manananggal separates at the waist, with her top half soaring off into the sky and her bottom half being left behind.

THE WORLD OF YOKAI

Yokai have long been celebrated creatures throughout Japanese folklore. They can best be described through the word 'yokai' itself, which is made up of the kanji for 'bewitching, attractive, calamity', and 'spectre, apparition, mystery'. Yokai go by many different names, but in broad terms the word can be used as a catchall for all monsters and supernatural beings.

Tales of different types of yokai vastly contrast, with some being malevolent and mischievous beings out to cause harm and chaos, and others bringing good fortune to all who encounter them. Different kinds also stand out in appearance: yokai often possess animal-like features, sporting wings or shells, but some are far more humanoid, others resemble objects, and some have no shape at all. However, all possess unearthly supernatural abilities, with shape shifting being a common shared trait.

Many yokai have been popular figures since the dawn of ancient Japanese mythology, with folklorists and historians believing them to be personifications of supernatural or unaccountable phenomena of the time. During the Edo period many artists began using well-known yokai to invent their own, and as time passed it got harder and harder to discern which yokai originate from traditional folklore and which were made up along the way.



A rendering of a yokai by Japanese artist Utagawa Kuniyoshi. The artwork is titled 'Kidomaru and the Tengu'

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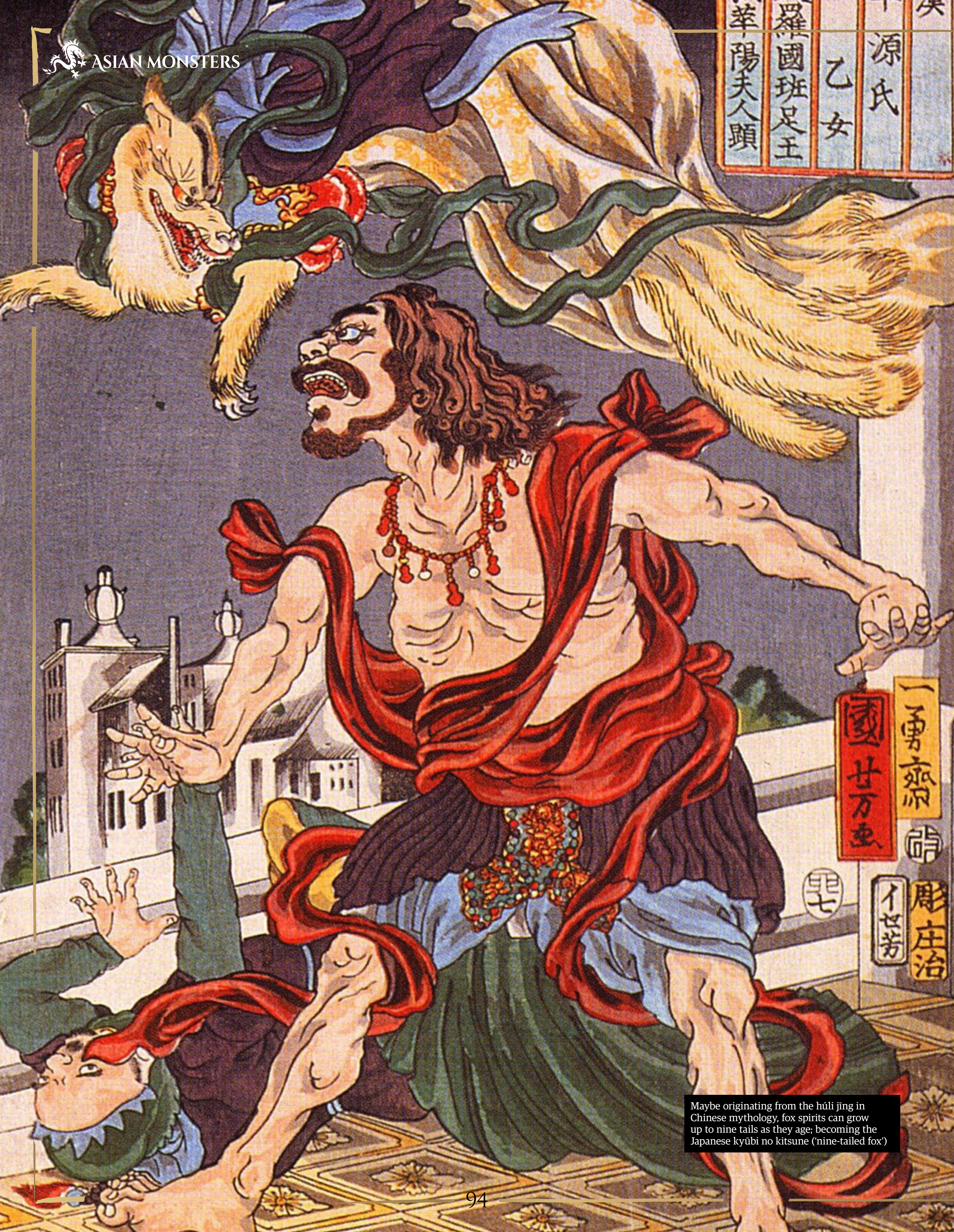

源氏
乙女
羅國班足王
華陽夫人顕
一勇斎
國芳画
彫庄治

Maybe originating from the húli jīng in Chinese mythology, fox spirits can grow up to nine tails as they age; becoming the Japanese kyūbi no kitsune ('nine-tailed fox')

KITSUNE: THE FOX SPIRITS OF JAPAN

Whether revered guardians or nefarious trickster spirits, the alluring fox spirits of Japan have enthralled people for centuries, and still do today

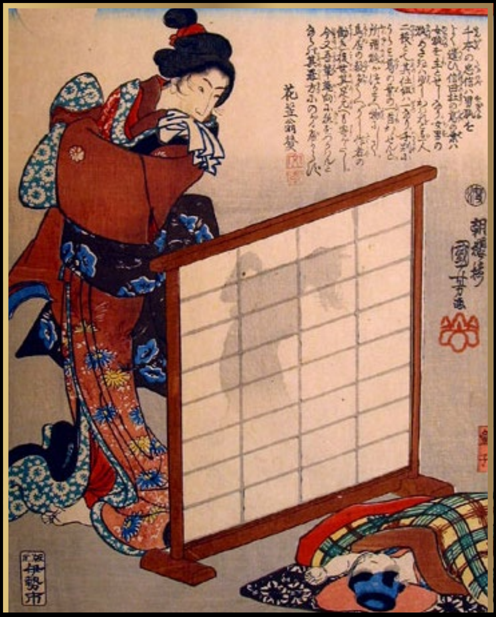
Written by Dee Dee Chainey

Kitsune are Japanese fox spirits, a type of Japanese yōkai with up to nine tails. Legends tell that they are trickster figures, like many fox-related creatures across different cultures, whose powers include the ability to become invisible and find lost things, and they are renowned for their great intelligence and long lives.

While there are many local variants, many split them into two kinds: the zenko, or 'good foxes', and the malicious version known as yako, 'field foxes'. The benevolent kind are the messengers of Inari, the kami - goddess or spirit - of rice, agriculture and fertility.

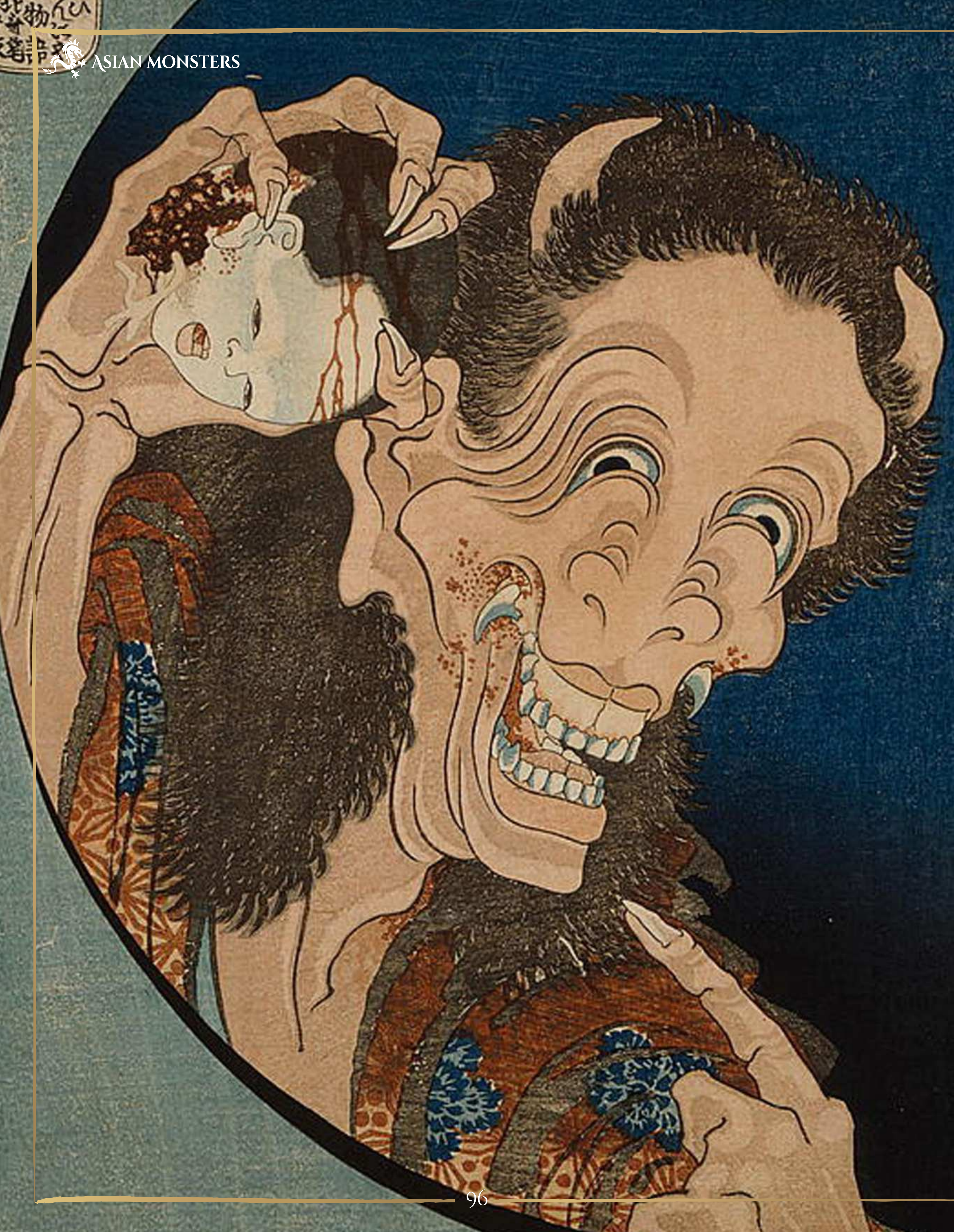
While both types are shape shifters, who are able to disguise themselves in human form - the evil tales suggest the preferred form is that of a winsome maiden, allowing them to snare unsuspecting men with their wiles. Some stories recount how they become the lovers of humans, or even their fox-wives, and bear their children. Those viewed as malevolent are blamed for a myriad of human experiences, including sickness, enchantment and bad luck. Kitsune are able to enter human bodies, possessing them, causing them to froth at the mouth, run naked through the streets, speak in tongues, and sometimes- eerily - a moving lump can be seen writhing underneath their skin. They are able to attach themselves to both individuals and specific families, which causes bad luck for all in the vicinity, and these families are ostracised by their neighbours. Such a spirit must be appeased by the family with food and offerings, especially their favourites: tofu, abura-age made from refried soyabeans, and azuki meshi, a dish of azuki beans and rice. If well-treated, they can bring prosperity to a family, and are renowned for repaying favours with the true gifts of protection, wisdom and good health. Tales tell their tangible gifts often decay to nothing in time, leaving the recipient disappointed and their efforts fruitless.

You can protect yourself from their charms by forming a diamond shape with your fingers and blowing through it - or be safe, and avoid the deserted places they frequent entirely. If you do fall prey to them, however, the only two methods to redeem you include a onmyoji, or spiritual healer, exorcising it with soft words, or of course, having the living daylights beaten out of you. Terrifyingly, legends do tell of women suspected to be kitsune being beaten and burned to death, and one can only wonder if the tales are true, like with many modern witchcraft cases around the world even now.



A kitsune's true identity can be uncovered by looking for their fox shadow, or fox tail. Kuzunoha the fox-woman, by Utagawa Kuniyoshi, 19th century

> "Kitsune are able to enter human bodies, possessing them"



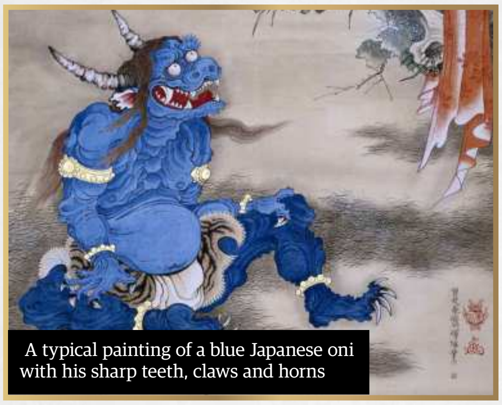
THE KANABO WIELDING ONI

These monstrous creatures are known throughout Japan but most likely originated in China and entered the Japanese consciousness along with the introduction of Buddhism

Written by Joanna Elphick

Huge demonic monsters, known collectively as 'yokai oni', are said to lurk behind bushes and rocks, ready to cause trouble to unwary travellers. Other oni stand at the gates of hell, or Jigoku, taunting and harassing those sinners destined for the underworld. Their appearance is remarkably similar to that of a European troll or smelly ogre commonly found skulking beneath dilapidated bridges in children's fairy tales, with long, straggly hair, wickedly sharp claws, and large gaping mouths full of razor teeth. Some have multiple horns protruding from their heads whilst others make do with one solitary spike, jutting out towards the sky. All are grotesquely ugly despite their beautiful gaudy colouring of blue, pink, red, green or white.

As with the European troll frequently depicted swinging a wooden cudgel, oni are often portrayed carrying a spiked, iron-coated war club, known as a kanabo, used by the samurai across feudal Japan. By brandishing a kanabo in one hand, the demon-like oni can display their mythical strength and intimidate those unfortunate enough to cross their path, acting as maniacal bullies as they wriggle their extra fingers and toes in a menacing fashion.

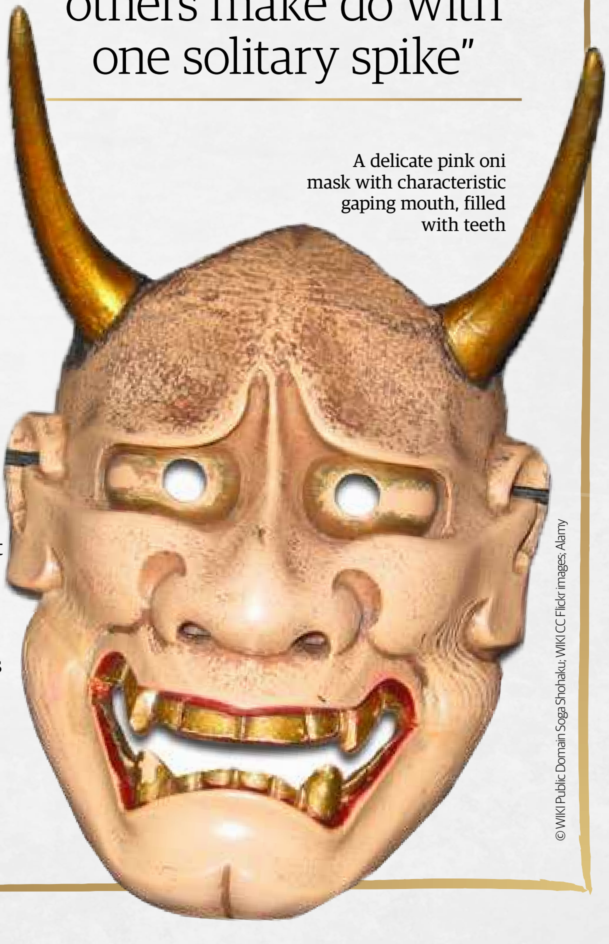

A typical painting of a blue Japanese oni with his sharp teeth, claws and horns

In Japanese art, oni tend to be represented naked but for a loincloth made of tiger-skin, the tatty pelt dangling between their fat legs. Occasionally, oni are shown wearing the long, dusty robes of a pilgrim or wandering Buddhist monk but these, less vicious creatures, are far rarer. The arms, wrists and ankles are sometimes adorned with golden bangles to highlight their power and importance, but nothing can detract from their general hideous visage.

The origin of oni is not clear but many believe that those people so wicked in life that they are considered beyond redemption become oni when their evil souls escape their mortal bodies. Such creatures dwell in the fiery pits of hell. Some people are so utterly monstrous that they transform into oni whilst still alive and here, the creatures stay on Earth to terrorise the villagers.

Other oni, usually of the red variety, are thought to be less depraved and can appear in the form of a kindly ancestral spirit who wants to befriend humans. Such creatures are seen as protective rather than fiendish, and their image is sometimes used to repel bad luck. Just as the gargoyle protects churches in Europe, roof tiles depicting an ugly oni face, can sometimes be spotted on Japanese buildings.

> "Some have multiple horns protruding from their heads whilst others make do with one solitary spike"


A delicate pink oni mask with characteristic gaping mouth, filled with teeth

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With their red skin and comically long noses, the daitengu are some of the most recognisable spirits in Japanese folklore

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TENGU: TRICKSTERS OR PROTECTORS?

Once depicted as malevolent opponents of Buddhism, tengu are now thought to be well-meaning spirits that guard the temples…

Written by Poppy-Jay Palmer

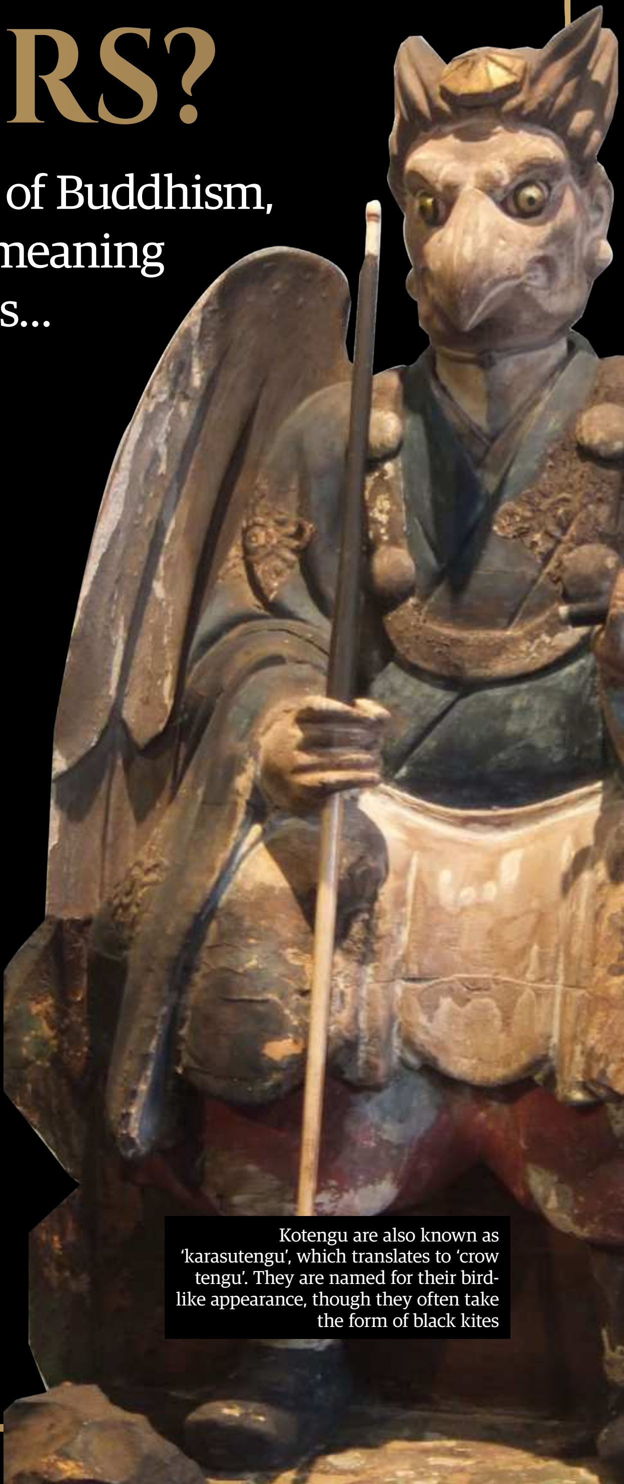
Spirits, demons and supernatural creatures have always been a regular fixture in Japanese folklore. These beings are known as yōkai, and are famed for their bewitching natures, with many taking the form of spectres and apparitions. Some are seen as malevolent villains and are believed to bring misfortune and cause harm. Others are considered lucky charms, delivering good fortune to those who encounter them. Some are humanoids, and others are animal-like in form. But all yōkai are mysterious and personifications of supernatural or unexplainable phenomena.

The yōkai best known to the Western world is the tengu. Possessing great physical strength, magical powers, immense martial arts skills and the ability to fly, you'd be forgiven for thinking they were superheroes. The creatures have a long standing connection to Japanese culture and religion, particularly Buddhism. But the tengu have historically been seen as sworn enemies of the Buddhist faith, with a reputation for trying to lure people off the road to enlightenment, robbing temples, shape shifting into Buddha to delude monks, and possessing women to tempt holy men.

In some traditions, tengu are thought to be the reincarnated spirits of angry priests, which led to disputing Buddhist sects often calling the other sect 'tengu' to imply their teachings were deceptive and dangerous.

There are two different categories of tengu: daitengu and kotengu. The daitengu, or 'great tengu', are the most famous of the pair, and are often depicted as semi-human figures with bright red skin, comically long noses, and wings, who reside in deep mountain forests. With special skills like wind control, flight and swordsmanship, daitengu are regularly believed to cause wars and natural disasters, and even abduct humans, sometimes to torment them and sometimes to teach them magic. Kotengu, or 'lesser tengu', take the form of black kites and other birds of prey. They are depicted wearing monks' robes, but are far more animalistic than daitengu in both appearance and behaviour. Though kotengu are seen as the servants of daitengu, they actually pre-date their more powerful counterparts. But where daitengu are intelligent and sophisticated, kotengu eat humans and are easily fooled.

Once believed to be a sort of trickster figure that lured people into woods and threw pebbles at their houses for fun, the tengu's image has morphed into something more positive over time. From the 18th century onwards, many of them were regarded as good spirits that guarded the Buddhist temples.



Kotengu are also known as 'karasutengu', which translates to 'crow tengu'. They are named for their bird-like appearance, though they often take the form of black kites

“Stories of the yeti have been passed down through generations”

Tales of the yeti were told to discourage people, especially children, from approaching wild animals instead of staying within the safety of their community

TALES OF THE YETI

The yeti has become the star of many big screen films, but the ape-like snow beast originated from folktales told by the Sherpa people of the Himalayas

Written by Poppy-Jay Palmer

Thanks to cinema, we all know of the Yeti, the fearsome but elusive ape-like creature that leaves footprints in the snow. Also known as the Abominable Snowman in Western culture, the yeti has dominated the screen perhaps more than any other mythical creature. From black and white horrors *The Snow Creature* (1954) and *Man Beast* (1956) to modern animated films like *Smallfoot* (2018), *Abominable* (2019) and *Missing Link* (2019), yetis have been a regular fixture in mythical alpine hijinks for decades.

But despite its silver screen fame, few stories touch on the mythology of the yeti, which starts with Himalayan folklore. Also known as Meh-Teh by the people indigenous to the region, the yeti used to be seen as a real living and breathing creature – just another wildlife threat alongside tigers and bears. But the mythical character, an enormous man-beast with grey or white fur, sabre-like teeth and the ability to walk on two legs, has become an important part of the legends and history of the Sherpa, the communities that live in the most mountainous regions of Nepal and the Himalayas.

Stories of the yeti have been passed down through generations and become popular across a number of nearby countries, including Mongolia, Bhutan, Tibet, India and Pakistan. One folktale tells of Sherpas seeking revenge from a menacing group of yetis by getting drunk and fighting each other to encourage the yetis to do the same. Their trick fails, and they only enrage the beasts further. Another tells of a yeti growing taller as the sun rises and causing any human that sees it to lose consciousness. In some tales, the yeti is female, like the one who captures a human man and gives birth to his children. When the man escapes with their son, the yeti kills and eats their daughter.

Every story has something in common: the beast is dangerous and should be avoided. The folktales act as a warning to avoid wild animals and stay close to the safety within the community.

When Westerners began exploring the Himalayan region in the 19th and 20th centuries, tales of the yeti spread even further. During British explorer Charles Howard-Bury's 1921 expedition to Mount Everest, he encountered large footprints in the snow. Locals explained that the footprints were that of metoh-kangmi, or 'man-bear snow-man'. Upon returning home, Howard-Bury shared his experience with a reporter, who badly translated the name to 'Abominable Snowman', and the legend finally made it to the Western world.

Yeti folktales often take place in the most mountainous regions in the Himalayas, and tell of the dangers of wild animals

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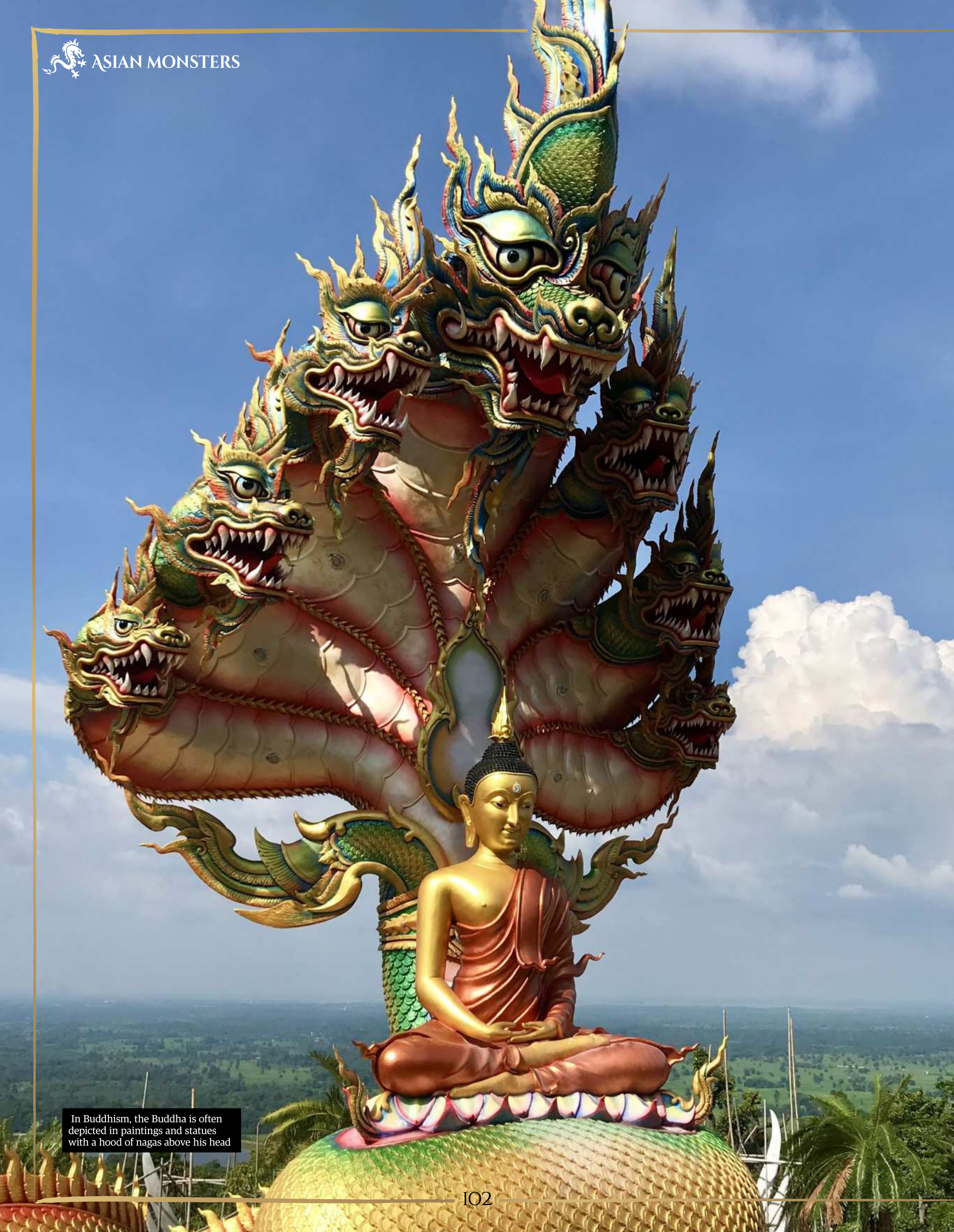

In Buddhism, the Buddha is often depicted in paintings and statues with a hood of nagas above his head

THE NAGAS

Half-snake and half-human, these mythical creatures are mainstays of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, and are still celebrated across South and Southeast Asia today

Written by Poppy-Jay Palmer

From the huge serpents with human heads in *Dungeons and Dragons* to the ancient elves with snake-like features from the *Warcraft* franchise, nagas have become a popular fixture in the world of fantasy. But the semi-divine beings actually originated from South and Southeast Asian cultures, getting their start in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. Rituals devoted to the supernatural beings have taken place across the region for more than 2,000 years. Nagas differ in appearance slightly depending on which religion you ask – sometimes they're depicted as being fully human with snakes on their heads and necks, sometimes they're half-snake half-human beings, and sometimes they're simply fully serpentine.

In Hindu mythology, nagas are a strong and handsome species that can assume a fully human or fully serpentine form, and can be found scattered throughout the religion's iconography. According to legend, the Earth was once filled with nagas, before Brahma the creator god relegated the creatures to the netherworld. Now, they inhabit a beautiful, gem-adorned underground kingdom known as Naga-loka, or Patala-loka, and are also often associated with bodies of water, including rivers, lakes, seas and wells. The nagas' venomous bite can make them potentially dangerous to humans, but the creatures take a protagonist role in Hindu mythology, having been commanded by Brahma to bite only the truly evil or those destined to die at a young age.

The nagas take a similar shape in Buddhism, as great cobras, but some are capable of using magical powers to transform themselves to resemble humans. Unlike the nagas from Hinduism, these versions of the creatures reside both in Naga-loka among other minor deities and in human-inhabited areas of Earth. Some nagas are water dwellers, while others prefer to say on land, often inside caverns. In Buddhist mythology, it's believed that Muchalinda, the naga king, sheltered the Buddha from a great storm for seven days while he was deep in meditation shortly after his enlightenment, covering the Buddha's head with his seven snake heads. Muchalinda's protection symbolised that nagas can place their natural powers in the service of a Buddha. The two chief disciples of the Buddha, Sariputta and Moggallana, are both referred to as Mahanaga, or 'great naga', and some of the most important figures in Buddhist history have 'naga' incorporated into their names.

> "Rituals devoted to the supernatural beings have taken place across the region for more than 2,000 years."

As minor deities, nagas have been celebrated in the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain faiths across South and Southeast Asia for more than 2,000 years

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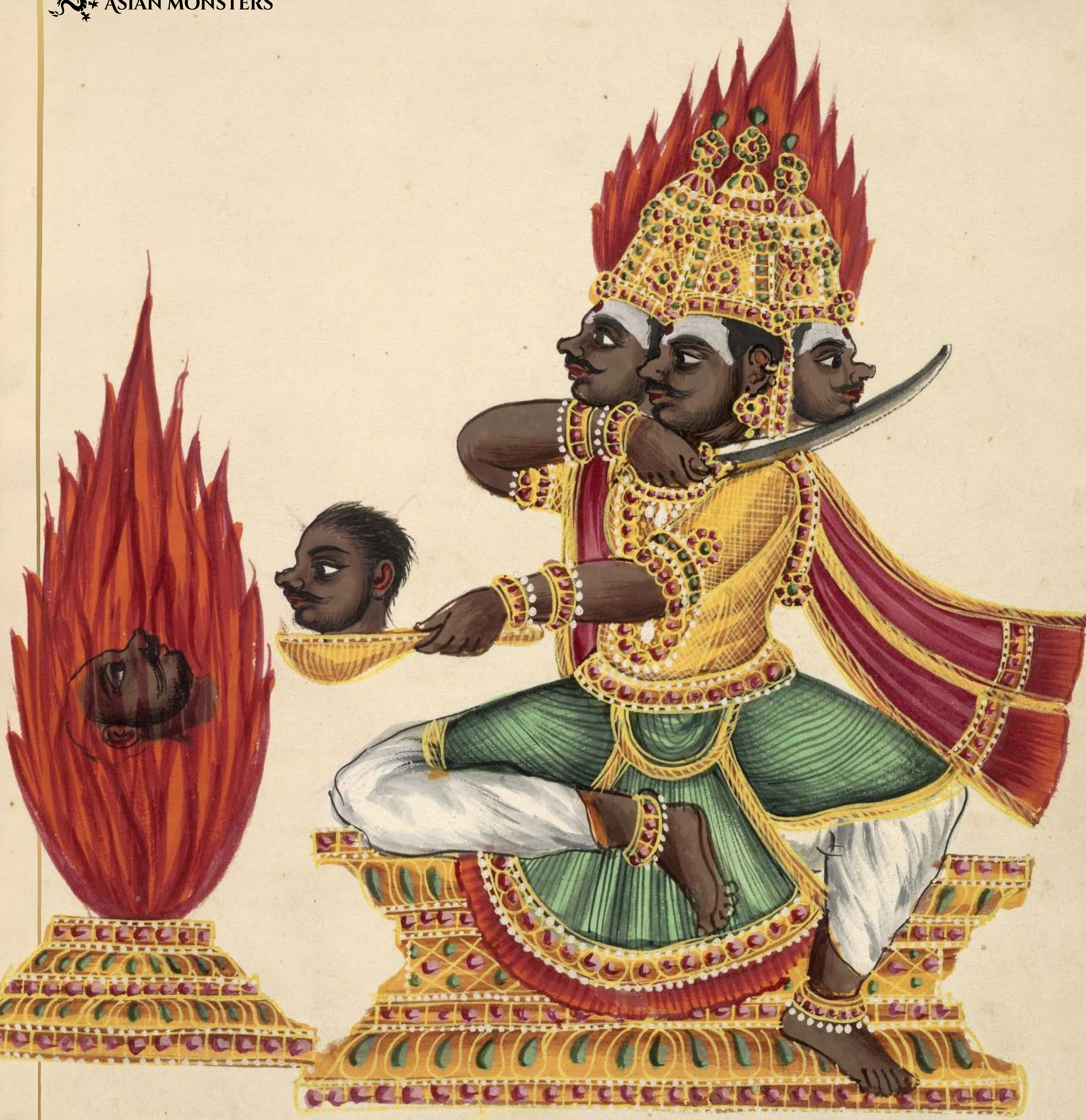


The three-headed rakshasa Trishira, son of Ravana, indulges his bloodthirsty nature. He was later killed by the god Hanuman

THE FEARSOME RAKSHASA

These warlike Indian monsters feature in divine epics and sacred stories, and not always as the villain…

Written by April Madden

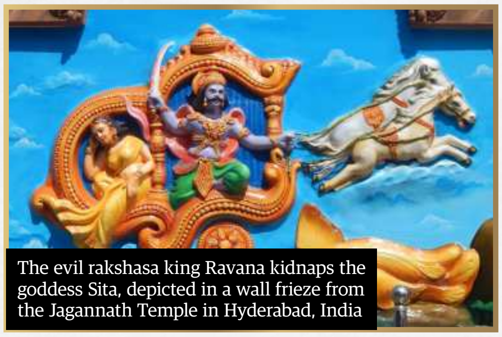
If you're a fan of tabletop or videogame RPGs, you might think you're familiar with the rakshasa. You're probably thinking of a tiger-headed creature, perhaps blue-skinned, sword-wielding and unrelentingly fierce.

In Hindu and later Buddhist mythology, rakshasa and their female equivalent, rakshasi, are certainly fierce, and thanks to their shape-changing abilities, maybe they do occasionally sport animal features. They certainly have a predator's fangs and claws, but when the female ones use their 'maya' (powers of illusion) to disguise these by appearing in human form, they are known as rakshesha instead.

Formed from the sleeping breath of the creator god Brahma at the end of the Satya Yuga, the golden age of Hindu mythology, rakshasa are so bloodthirsty that legend says the moment they were born they started to eat Brahma himself. He cried out to the god Vishnu to protect him, and Vishnu banished the rakshasa to Earth. Here the rakshasa became numerous, and became famous warriors. There were good and evil rakshasa, both of whom were said to join the armies of warlords in order to indulge in their favourite occupation, battle. Some rakshasa were man-eaters, and these were feared on the battlefield more than anything else. The rakshasa is often depicted as a blood-drinker similar to a vampire, and they have other similar powers, including shape shifting and illusion, flight, and the ability to smell human flesh. Rakshasa characters feature heavily in the epics the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Most are depicted as villains, but Vibhishana is a notable exception. A son of the part-demigod sage Vishrava and his rakshashi wife Kaikashi, Vibhishana is shown as a devout Hindu scholar who helps the hero Rama when his wife Sita is kidnapped by Vibhishana's brother Ravana, King of Lanka. Vibhishana breaks an invisibility spell on Ravana's rakshasa soldiers, enabling Rama's troops to defeat them and rescue Sita. Vibhishana then becomes King of Lanka and of the remaining rakshasa.

Ghatotkacha is another son of a human father and rakshasi mother; his mother Hidimbi saved his father Bhima from her evil brother. Ghatotkacha inherited his mother's considerable magical powers, which were stronger at night, and it took the strength of a divine weapon to kill him, during the dynastic struggles of the Kurukshetra War. A temple in Manali, in Himachal Pradesh in northern India, is dedicated to him.

In Buddhist mythology, a group of rakshasi met Buddha. They swore to protect and follow the Lotus Sutra. One of them was Hariti, a rakshasi who in some Buddhist traditions is revered as a goddess.



The evil rakshasa king Ravana kidnaps the goddess Sita, depicted in a wall frieze from the Jagannath Temple in Hyderabad, India

Hariri is a rakshasi who features in the Lotus Sutra as a devotee of Buddha. In some Buddhist traditions she is revered as a goddess

> "The rakshasa is often depicted as a blood-drinker similar to a vampire, and they have other similar powers"

© Alamy, Getty images

QILIN

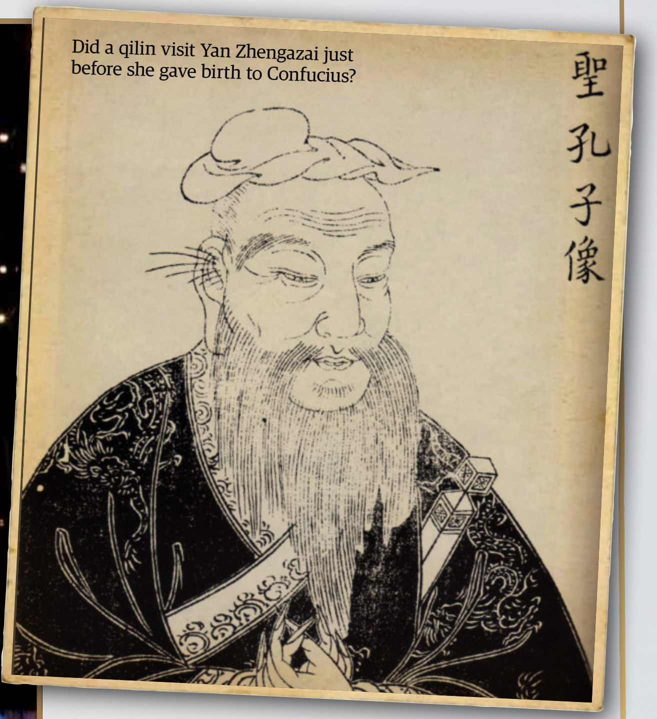
To be graced with a visit from a qilin is considered to be an honour and a great gift according to the people of East and Southeast Asia

Written by Joanna Elphick

Whilst many mythical creatures inspire fear and trepidation, the noble qilin is thought to bring great fortune upon those it greets. This particular and exacting beast is said to only appear before the wise and prudent, or those destined to be of great consequence in the future. A sighting is therefore thought to be an auspicious event. Legend has it that during September, 551 BCE, a heavily pregnant woman by the name of Yan Zhengzai, met with a qilin on the dusty road into her village of Zou. Weeks later, she gave birth to a baby boy whom she named Confucius. The boy would later become a master of philosophy and the greatest of Chinese sages. It is also claimed that the creature was seen cavorting in the garden of the Yellow Emperor, one of the legendary Chinese sovereigns, some 2,000 years earlier. As a result, the qilin is looked upon as a good omen and a symbol of success and prosperity.

Although highly imposing, and known to punish the wicked when the need arises, the mighty qilin is generally thought to be both peaceful and benevolent with the ability to walk upon the ground without displacing the individual blades of grass or harming the lowliest of creatures. Visually, the qilin is a most impressive chimerical being. The head is sometimes described as that of a lion whilst other images depict the face of a gentle, smiling dragon. Either way, the head is crowned with spiralling antlers, or sometimes, a single horn. The body tends to resemble a deer covered in shimmering fish scales with the swishing tail of an ox and the delicate hooves of a horse. The creature is often portrayed with a mane of golden, glowing flames and is occasionally said to be encrusted with multicoloured jewels and gems. The qilin has often been connected to the giraffe and even means

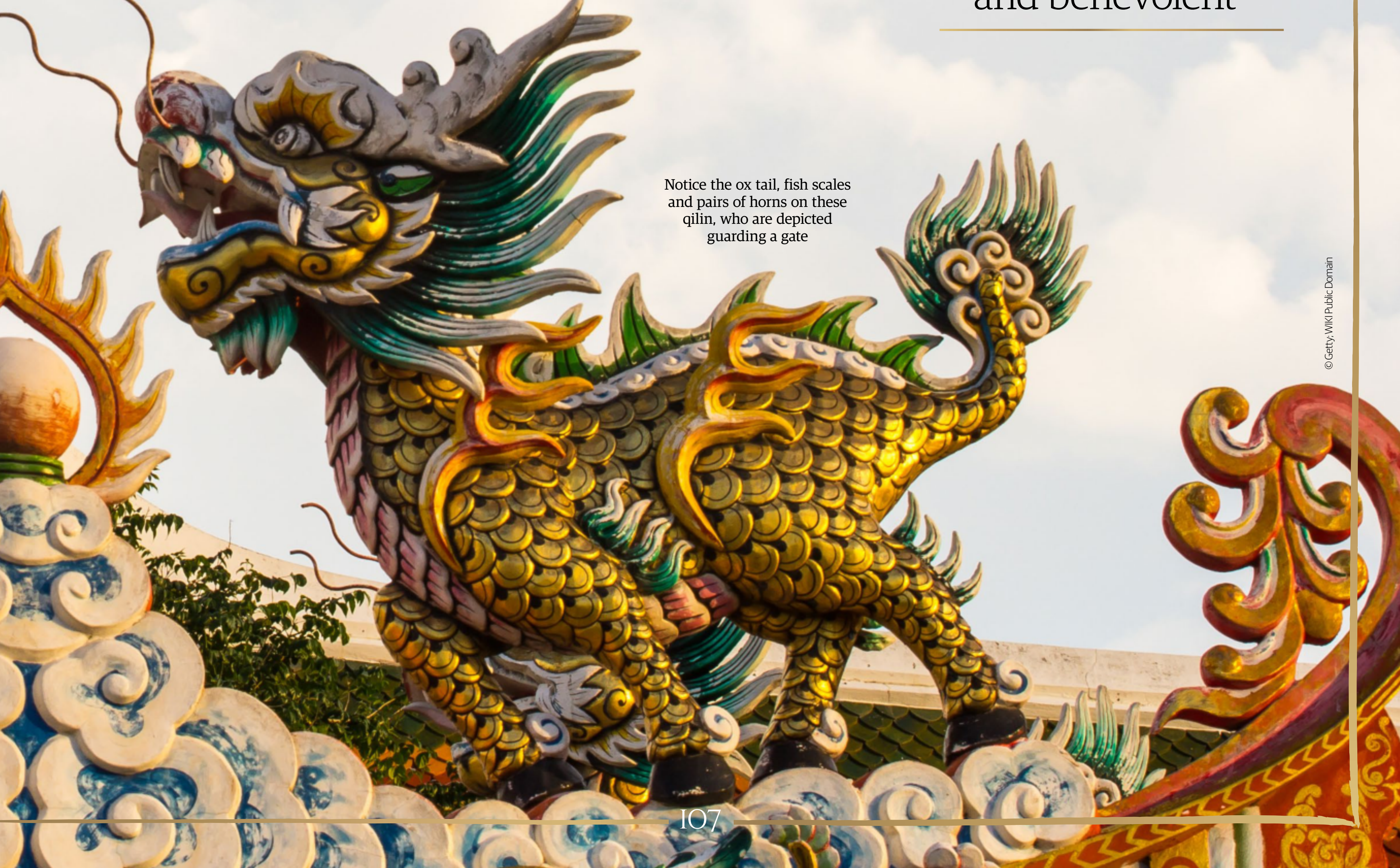
The qilin is a good omen of success and prosperity, so it's invoked to bring luck and fortune



Did a qilin visit Yan Zhengazai just before she gave birth to Confucius?

giraffe in both Japanese and Korean. During the 15th century, a pair of giraffes were captured in Somalia and presented to the Yongle Emperor, who immediately proclaimed them to be magical creatures. In this way, images of the qilin appeared in the form of stylised giraffes across the Ming Dynasty whilst modern day depictions tend to reflect our understanding of a unicorn. The general appearance may vary but the adoration and respect of this most beautiful of mythical creatures across China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and Thailand, remains constant.

> "The mighty qilin is generally thought to be both peaceful and benevolent"



Notice the ox tail, fish scales and pairs of horns on these qilin, who are depicted guarding a gate

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THE HOPPING JIANGSHI ZOMBIES

The jiangshi, one of the most feared supernatural creatures in China, are known as hopping zombies due to their peculiar stiff-legged gait

Written by Melanie Clegg

The hopping zombie, or jiangshi, first appeared in Chinese culture during the Qing Dynasty, when they were described as stiff-bodied reanimated corpses that moved about with a peculiar hopping gait due to being unable to use their legs properly. The jiangshi were said to have long, white hair and behave almost like wild animals, terrorising neighbourhoods unfortunate enough to be plagued by them. In appearance, they could vary greatly – with some looking almost alive, while others appeared decayed to the point that they were unrecognisable, with a pale greenish complexion, that some believed to be the result of mould growing on their skin.

The jiangshi were often described as wearing the robe and rimmed hat usually associated with Qing Dynasty mandarins, which they accessorised with a yellow paper talisman bearing a sealing spell. It was speculated that they originated with the mystical practice of Xiangxi ganshi, which was believed to have taken place when someone died far from home and their family couldn't afford to bring them back for burial. Instead, a Taoist priest would be hired to reanimate the corpse so that they could walk home by themselves, usually at night in order to avoid unfortunate encounters with the living - mainly because it was considered bad luck to encounter the jiangshi on their way home.

According to legend, the jiangshi usually hid in coffins or dark caves during the day, only venturing out at night in order to hunt their prey, whom they killed by absorbing their life force in order to become more powerful. One of the first accounts of their behaviour can be found in the *Yuewei Caotang Biji*, which was written in the 18th century by Ji Yun, who explained that they were usually either a person who had died very recently or a corpse that hadn't fully decomposed and then either been possessed by a demon or had their soul trapped in their body by dark magic. As the jiangshi were much feared, people were naturally keen to protect themselves and it was believed that they could be kept away by mirrors, objects made from peach tree wood, fire and other talismans, such as a special spell written in chicken blood on a yellow piece of paper, which was believed to completely immobilise the jiangshi if stuck to their forehead - if you dared get close enough to try it.

The jiangshi are easily recognisable thanks to their Qing Dynasty hat and yellow paper talisman stuck to their foreheads

> "According to legend, the jiangshi usually hid in coffins or dark caves during the day, only venturing out at night"

The horrifying jiangshi is one of the best known supernatural creatures in China, although there is some debate about whether they are actually vampires or zombies

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MODERN MONSTERS

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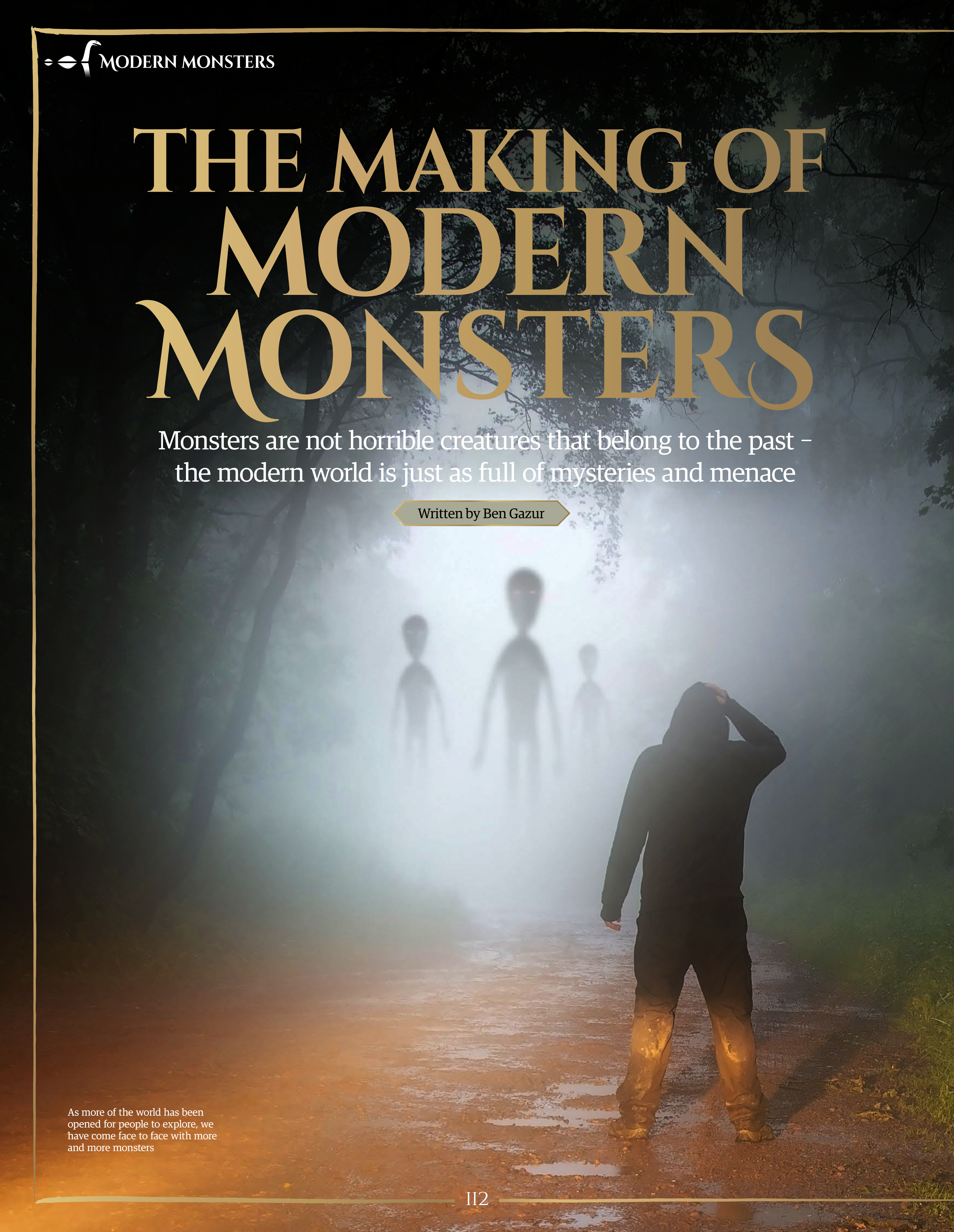
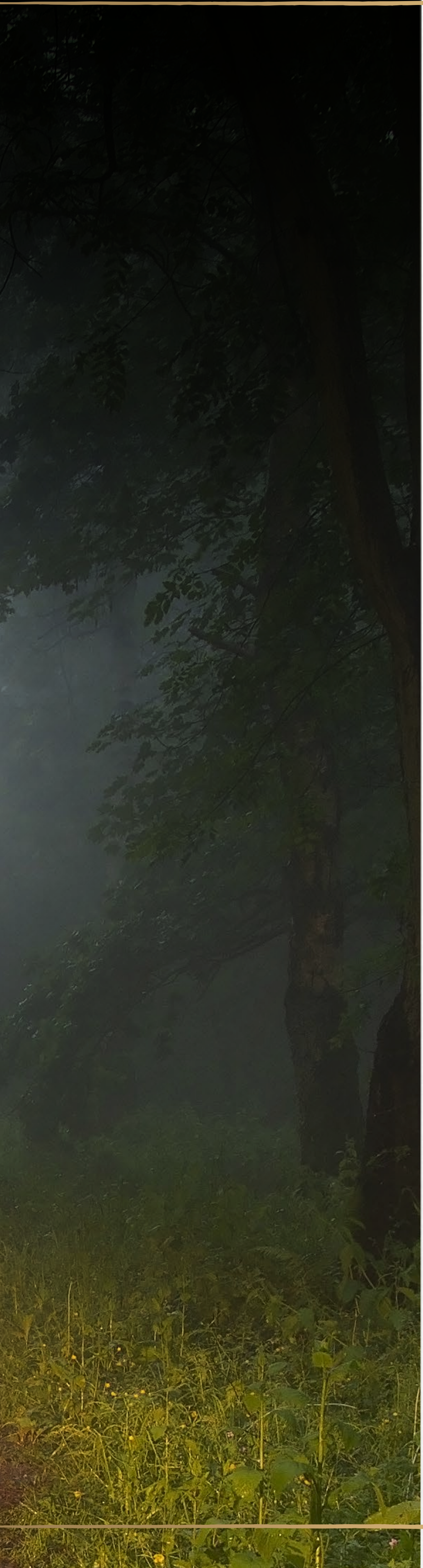
THE MAKING OF MODERN MONSTERS

Monsters are not horrible creatures that belong to the past – the modern world is just as full of mysteries and menace

Written by Ben Gazur



As more of the world has been opened for people to explore, we have come face to face with more and more monsters



It is late at night and you are driving along the isolated State Route 351 in Pennsylvania. Your headlights pick out a figure ambling by the side of the road. As you approach the person they turn towards your car. That's when you see that they have no face.

As you speed away you remember the tales you have heard about Charlie No-Face, or the Green Man, that other drivers have seen on this same stretch of road on dark nights. When you tell your friends they nod their heads. Everyone knows that Charlie No-Face is one of the monsters haunting the area.

HUMAN MONSTERS

While everyone had heard of Charlie No-Face hardly anyone knew that he was a real person – and not at all a monster. Raymond Robinson had suffered a terrible accident as a child that had burned off his eyes and nose. Knowing that people would react negatively to his appearance Robinson began to walk alone at night in quiet places. When people glimpsed him in their headlights they assumed the worst and sadly, a modern monster myth was born.

Urban legends have always existed. When people hear a tale that just has to be shared they have always told their neighbours. If that tale included a monster then it was almost bound to spread. In the 20th and 21st century urban legends have spread far beyond where oral retellings could reach. With newspapers, TV, and the internet as conduits, monsters have thoroughly permeated society. No number of Medieval bestiaries could compare.

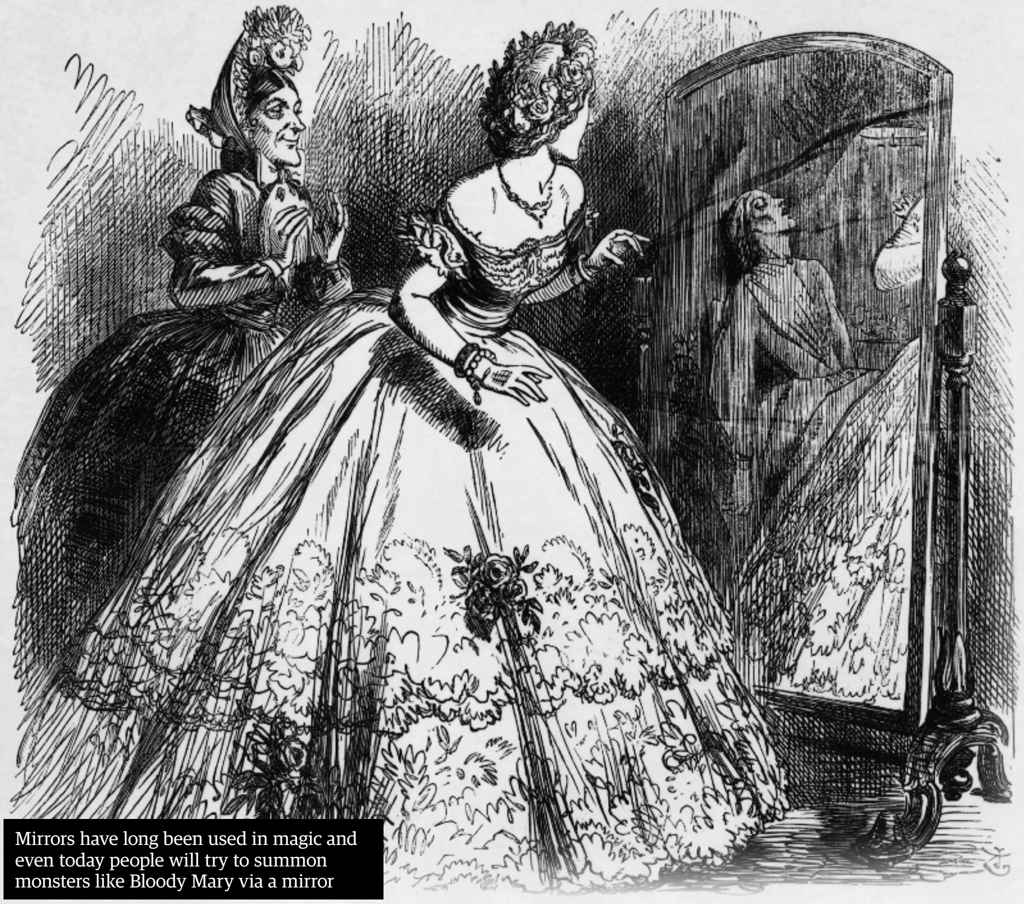
While old legends of monsters tended to place strange humanoids at the edges of the map, modern monstrous humans could be found in your home town. Those living near Clifton in Virginia have to fear the Bunny Man. If they travel under the Colchester Overpass in the area they are at risk of being murdered and mutilated – by a man in a bunny costume. The legend traces the origins of the Bunny Man to an escaped mental patient who, as well as human murder, has a penchant for eating pets.

Many human-shaped monsters that developed in the 20th century betray an underlying discomfort with the mentally and physically unwell. In various places in the USA you will find legends of small people with huge heads that lurk in wait to attack the unwary. Called Melon Heads, these monsters are said to be children suffering from the condition hydrocephalus. Placed into care they were treated horribly by those that should have looked after them and so they escaped into the nearby woods and caves. Now they take their revenge on anyone who stumbles across them.

> "Sasquatch, or Bigfoot, has long been thought to stalk through the forests of North America"

Other humanoid monsters are more like cryptids – unknown animals – than they are like humans. Sasquatch, or Bigfoot, has long been thought to stalk through the forests of North America, but even in the modern world new variations on this monster can appear. In Missouri in the 1970s sightings of a new ape-man began. "It had hair over the body as if it was an ape. Yet, the face was definitely human. It was more like a hairy human... Then it made a little

Aliens have largely taken the place of demons and fairies as the monsters of choice in the public imagination



Mirrors have long been used in magic and even today people will try to summon monsters like Bloody Mary via a mirror

BIG FOOT XING
DUE TO SIGHTINGS IN THE AREA OF A CREATURE RESEMBLING "BIG FOOT" THIS SIGN HAS BEEN POSTED FOR YOUR SAFETY

Cryptids like Bigfoot, or the sasquatch, have become a part of modern monster lore in the United States, where the mysterious primates are thought to wander the wilderness

gurgling sound like someone trying to whistle underwater." Known affectionately as Momo these creatures occupy the sparsely populated swamplands, which are just the sort of places most monsters seem to spring from.

When monsters appear in towns and cities they often take on a human appearance. Black-Eyed Children and Men in Black are both deeply unsettling and uncanny types of human monster that have been reported turning up at peoples' homes. The pale children with black eyes will knock at your door to beg, before turning threatening. Men in Black, while looking like nattily dressed humans, have been widely interpreted by those who believe in them. Some see them as agents working for the government. Some think they are demonic. Others see them as aliens visiting Earth and studying humans.

ALIENS!

Aliens, creatures from another world or dimension, have largely replaced demons as a focus for public panic. Legend has it, somewhat inaccurately, that when Orson Welles produced a radio drama of HG Wells' *The War of the Worlds* the audience went wild. Convinced that aliens really were descending on New Jersey, people panicked. It was held up as an example of the power that media could hold over society.

During the Cold War and the associated Space Race between the United States and the Soviet Union, more monsters than ever seemed to come from space. In films like *The Blob* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* threats from outer space descended on small-town America. Like the communist threat that lingered over the USA, both of these aliens took good citizens and converted them into something inhuman – whether goo or mindless copies.

> "Films that showed aliens helped to shape public perception of what alien encounters would be like"

Other films that showed aliens helped to shape public perception of what alien encounters would be like. In the year after *Independence Day* was released in the UK, reports of UFO sightings shot up fivefold. This was also at a time when *The X-Files* regularly showed threatening aliens and monsters on TV.

The history of alien monsters can in many ways be traced to Roswell, New Mexico in 1947 when a crashed flying saucer was reported. There were also rumours that the occupants of the spacecraft had been recovered. With small bodies and enlarged heads with big black eyes, they sounded like the hybrid offspring of Melon Heads and Black-Eyed Children.

Regardless of the fact that the wreckage found at Roswell was in all likelihood the remains of a weather balloon, aliens have continued to haunt us. Alien abductions where people are stolen away, often without any time passing, closely resemble stories of fairies taking people captive. Some have seen this as a sign of a common set of human fears.

ANIMALS ON THE LOOSE

Perhaps the oldest fears humans have relate to animals. Long years of evolution have trained humanity to flinch away from spiders, snakes, and maggots. Most dangerous animals have been banished from our lives, so it is out-of-place animals that we fear most.

In New York the only animal most people have to fear is an overly bold rat but since at least the 1920s there have been reports of larger creatures lurking beneath the city. Baby alligators were once sold in pet shops and many families soon found themselves with a much larger pet in their bathtubs than they wanted. Flushing them down the toilet solved the family's problem, but stories soon emerged of alligators living wild in sewers. Britain saw a similar spate of animal monsters

The Bunny Man of Virginia is said to murder those that stumble into his tunnel late at night

Escaped exotic pets have sparked a number of monster scares with some, like the idea of alligators in sewers, becoming well known 'facts'

in the 20th century when big cats prowled the moors and fields of the country. Panthers, leopards, and lions have all been spotted in the countryside and suburbs. Some have suggested that these animals are from populations that have survived in Britain since the last Ice Age, but most think they are individuals released or escaped from private ownership.

While no concrete evidence has ever been found for populations of big cats living in Britain, escaped animals do occur. In 2015 an elephant fled from a circus in Germany and killed a man taking a stroll in nearby woods. Even when there are not exotic animals on the loose, the human mind is primed to see dangers. Anything we cannot rapidly identify can be inflated in our minds into monstrous forms.

GHOSTS

Sometimes it is things that are not seen that can cause the most fright. Ghosts and ghouls have long existed in the dark of our minds but in the 20th century, stories spread about ways to summon them on command.

Bloody Mary is perhaps the most persistent ghostly monster in the Western world. It helps that the ritual for conjuring her is relatively simple. All you need to do to call on Bloody Mary is to recite her name into a mirror in a room lit by candles. Why someone might want to do this when Bloody Mary likes to scratch out people's eyes and drink their blood is an open question.

Other 20th century ghosts come unbidden. With the increase in car ownership and driving, more people found themselves out on the roads at night. People began to report seeing ghostly apparitions, but some had closer encounters. Vanishing hitch-hikers are ghosts who get into people's cars asking for a lift, only to mysteriously disappear from the vehicle.

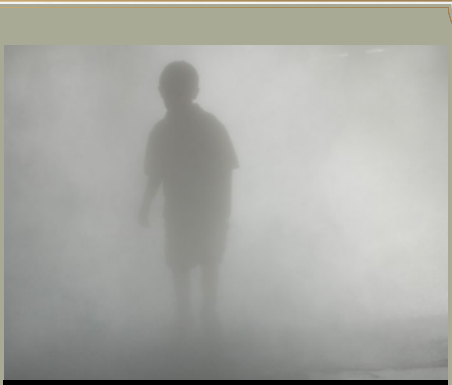
It's impossible to say whether these vanishing hitch-hikers, or any of the other modern monsters, really exist. The fact that so many monsters are only glimpsed in the darkness may hint at the role human imagination has played in creating them. And do remember Charlie No-Face if you spot a monster late at night though – the monster may not be so monstrous as you think.

INTERNET MYTH MAKING

"I was startled to hear a knock on the driver's-side window of my car. I looked over and saw two children staring at me from [the] street." This is how a post on a ghost-related internet mailing-list in 1998 described a monster or haunting that would soon become known as Black-Eyed Children. According to the author of this post "those darned black-eyed kids" were showing up across the United States and threatening people throughout the country.

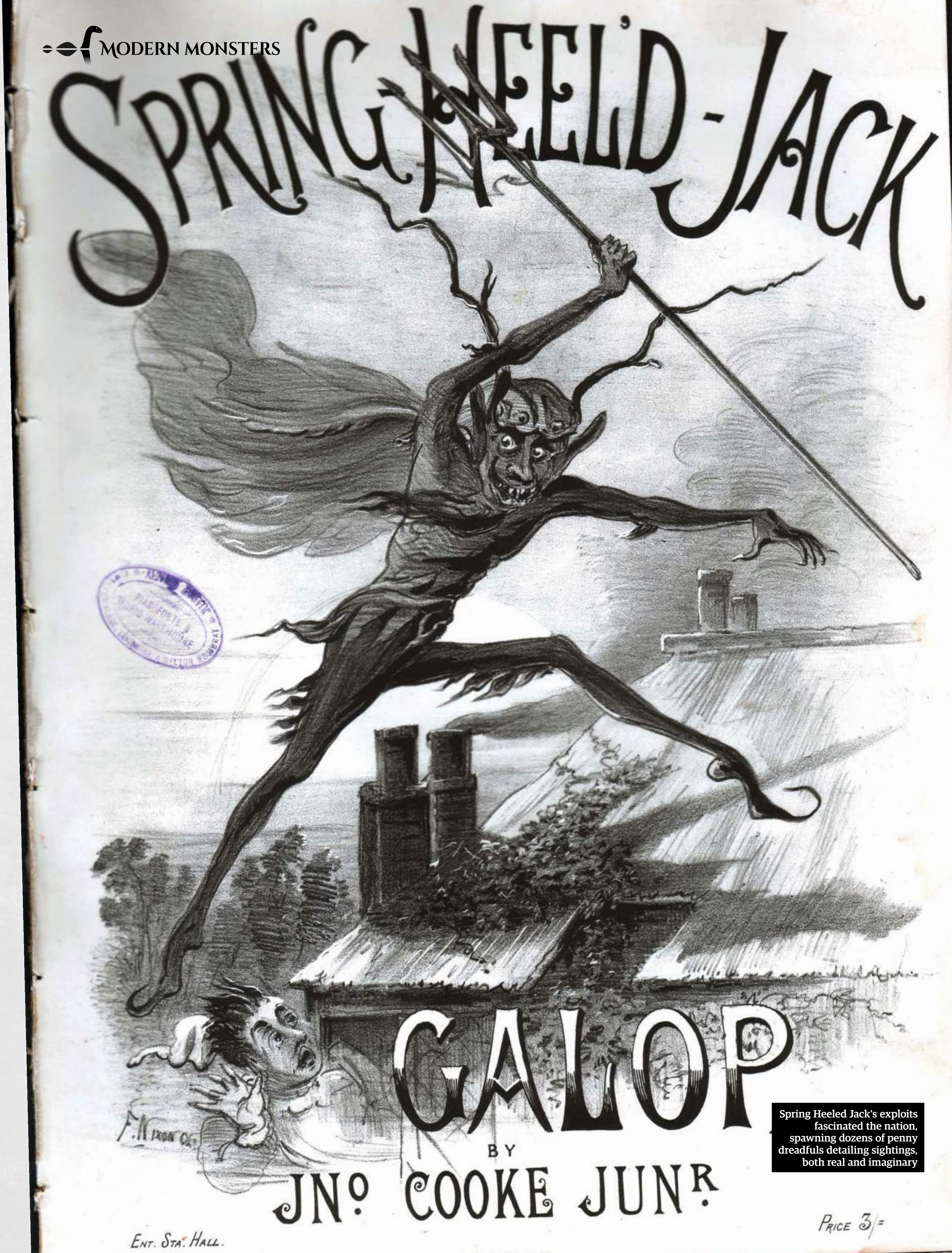
The internet has proved to be a powerful tool in spreading both information and disinformation about monsters. Many swear that Black-Eyed Children have been appearing since at least the 1980s, but there is no reference to them before that internet post from 1998. Like other monsters that first emerged on the web, the Black-Eyed Children have developed a life of their own.

In fact many internet monsters feed off each other, and aspects of one monster can transfer to another. One reported appearance of the Black-Eyed Children saw them announce "Our parents are here." These parents looked like two well-dressed men who were very tall, and very thin – just like the Slenderman who would later appear online.



The Black-Eyed Children are a terrifying modern monster myth, but they only go back a few decades – the first record of them is from 1998

© Getty Images; Alamy; wiki\ MarkScottAustinTX; Brocken Inaglory


SPRING-HEEL'D-JACK
PIANOFORTE & MUSIC WAREHOUSE
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Spring Heeled Jack's exploits fascinated the nation, spawning dozens of penny dreadfuls detailing sightings, both real and imaginary

SPRING HEELED JACK

Victorian England was completely enthralled by reports of a terrifying supernatural creature that attacked young women on the streets of London

Written by Melanie Clegg

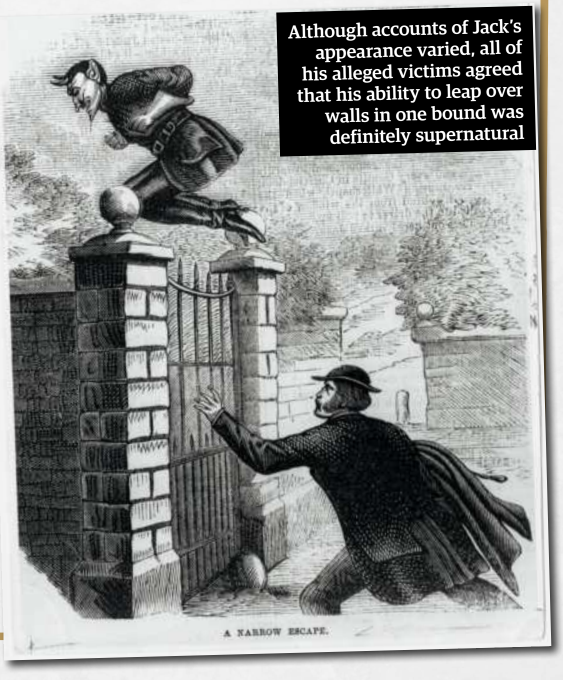
At a time when the British public was fascinated by Gothic novels, penny dreadfuls, spooky theatricals and séances, it's hardly surprising that rumours of ghosts and other malign spirits stalking the nation's streets in search of unwary citizens to terrorise. The first known sighting of Spring Heeled Jack, who would become the most famous manifestation of this, occurred in October 1837 when a young woman reported being violently attacked by a peculiar, clawed assailant while walking across Clapham Common. Her screams frightened him off, but the following evening, he struck again, leaping out at a carriage in order to force it off the road before, as witnesses would later claim, jumping over a nine feet high wall to make his escape.

Over the following months, tales about the so-called Spring Heeled Jack proliferated as a number of young women in London claimed to have been attacked by a demonic creature with a corpse-like face, sharp claws, fiery red eyes and the extraordinary ability to leap over high walls. The panic became even more intense in February 1838 when two teenage girls were attacked, with both reporting that their terrifying assailant "presented a most hideous and frightful appearance" and spurted blue and white flames from his mouth.

The newspapers were filled with stories and theories about the mysterious Jack, while the public avidly read numerous pamphlets and penny dreadfuls about his exploits. Although many people enjoyed attributing the attacks to a malevolent supernatural being, others believed that marauding young noblemen were to blame, with the young Marquess of Waterford, who was known to love pranks and never turn down a wager, being the number-one suspect.

There were several alleged sightings of Spring Heeled Jack over the rest of the century, although they dwindled away and became increasingly rare by the end of the 1840s. In 1877, a soldier on sentry duty at Aldershot Barracks reported being accosted by a peculiar figure who slapped his face and then leapt away "with astonishing bounds" when fired at, while in 1888 he allegedly made an appearance on a church roof in Liverpool before bounding away into the night. Although by now most people believed sightings to be nothing more sinister than the work of pranksters, there is no doubt that Spring Heeled Jack was an integral and significant part of Victorian culture, with even the most sceptical readers reading about his exploits, while parents scared their children into good behaviour by threatening them with a visit from Spring Heeled Jack, the devilish trickster turned folk hero.

> "A number of young women claimed to have been attacked by a demonic creature with the extraordinary ability to leap over high walls"


Although accounts of Jack's appearance varied, all of his alleged victims agreed that his ability to leap over walls in one bound was definitely supernatural

A NARROW ESCAPE.

Despite its reputation as an Unlucky Mummy, this ancient Egyptian artefact is not actually a mummy, but a painted coffin lid

THE UNLUCKY MUMMY

Does the ghost of an Egyptian priestess stalk the galleries of the British Museum causing death and suffering wherever she goes?

Written by Ben Gazur

The Unlucky Mummy first entered the British Museum collection in 1889, but was already trailing with it tales of disaster. Of those who took the object out of Egypt, one was said to have been shot when a gun inexplicably exploded, while another soon died in poverty. Its owner in Britain suffered financial losses before donating it to the museum, where it remains to this day.

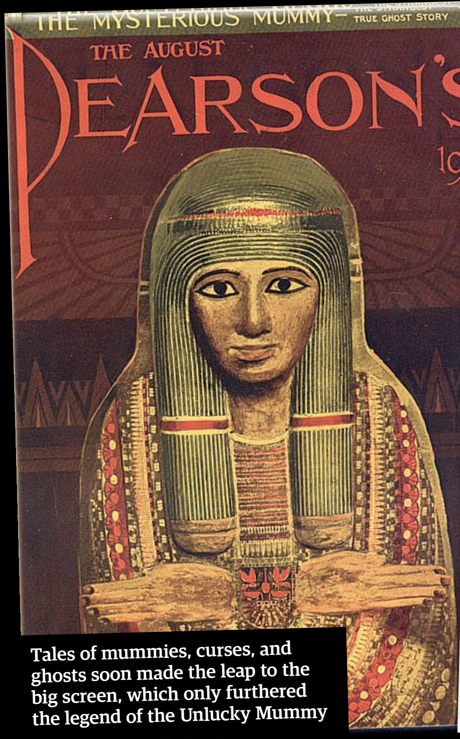
Perhaps the greatest tragedy linked to the Unlucky Mummy is the sinking of the Titanic in 1912. Almost immediately there were reports that the Unlucky Mummy had been on board the ship when it sank – some even suggested that it caused the infamous maritime disaster. Rumour had it that the Unlucky Mummy had been secretly removed from the museum due to its evil nature, and a replica placed in the galleries. When an American spotted the deception, he offered to buy the original, packed it up, and set sail for home on the Titanic. The fact that the object had never left the museum did not stop talk of its baleful effects on the unfortunate ship.

Explanations from museum authorities did little to quell rumours of the Unlucky Mummy's powers. Many people were said to have been struck down simply by looking at it in its case. One man swore that his cardiac issues were caused by the mummy. He begged the museum to return the Unlucky Mummy to her original grave to break the curse. The authorities were unable to comply – they had never possessed the mummy. What is commonly called the Unlucky Mummy is in fact just a painted lid that was placed over a mummy. Dating from around 950 BCE, the coffin lid seems to have been prepared for an important lady, though inscriptions on the lid do not identify her by name. The mummy itself apparently never left Egypt. Her ghost, however, apparently did come to Britain, as she was said to haunt the now closed British Museum underground station, wailing mournfully at night. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of Sherlock Holmes, was a believer in the ghost, and blamed the death of a reporter who had investigated the Unlucky Mummy on the "evil elemental" attached to it.

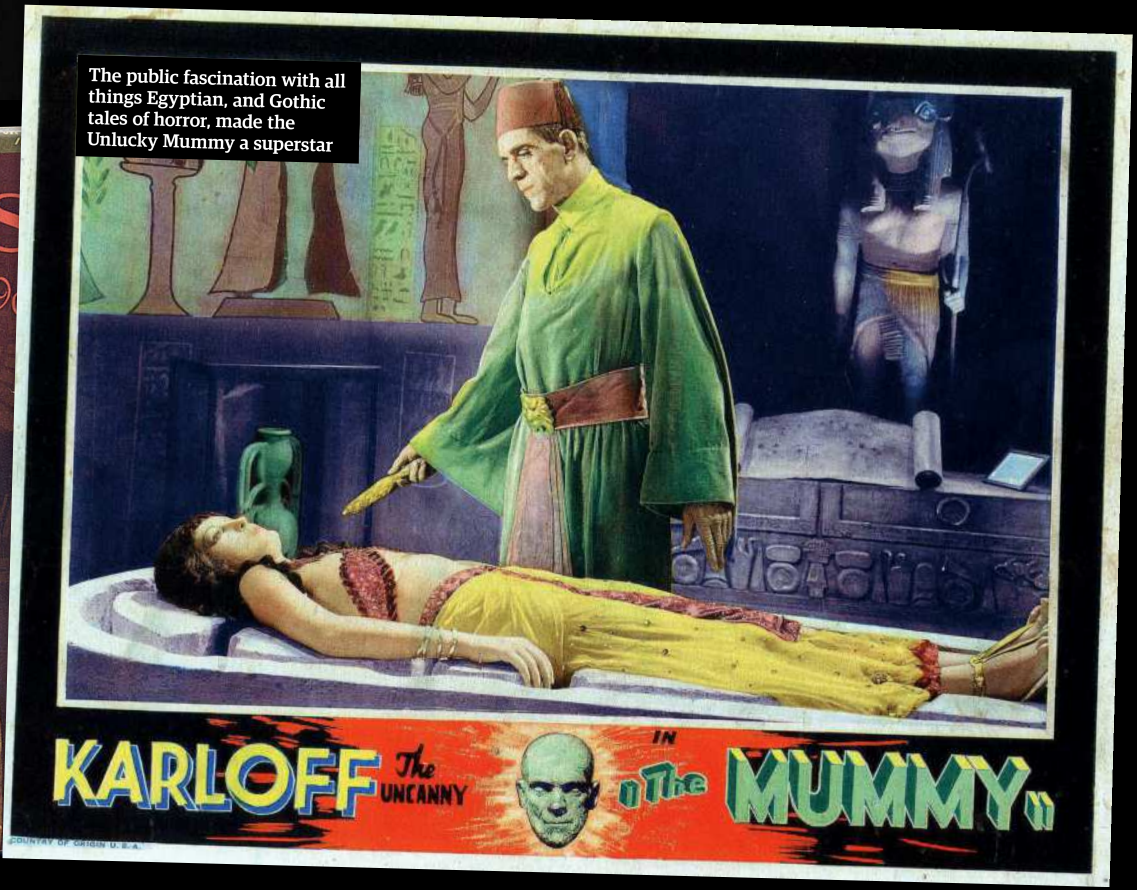
The British Museum was moved to report that this idea was "Nonsense," adding sniffily that "Sir Arthur perhaps naturally believes in supernatural agencies connected with Egyptian mummies and other Egyptian objects. I am afraid the officials of the British Museum do not." Regardless of what the museum believes, there are plenty of people who still impute the Unlucky Mummy with dark powers to this day.

> "The greatest tragedy linked to the Unlucky Mummy is the sinking of the Titanic"

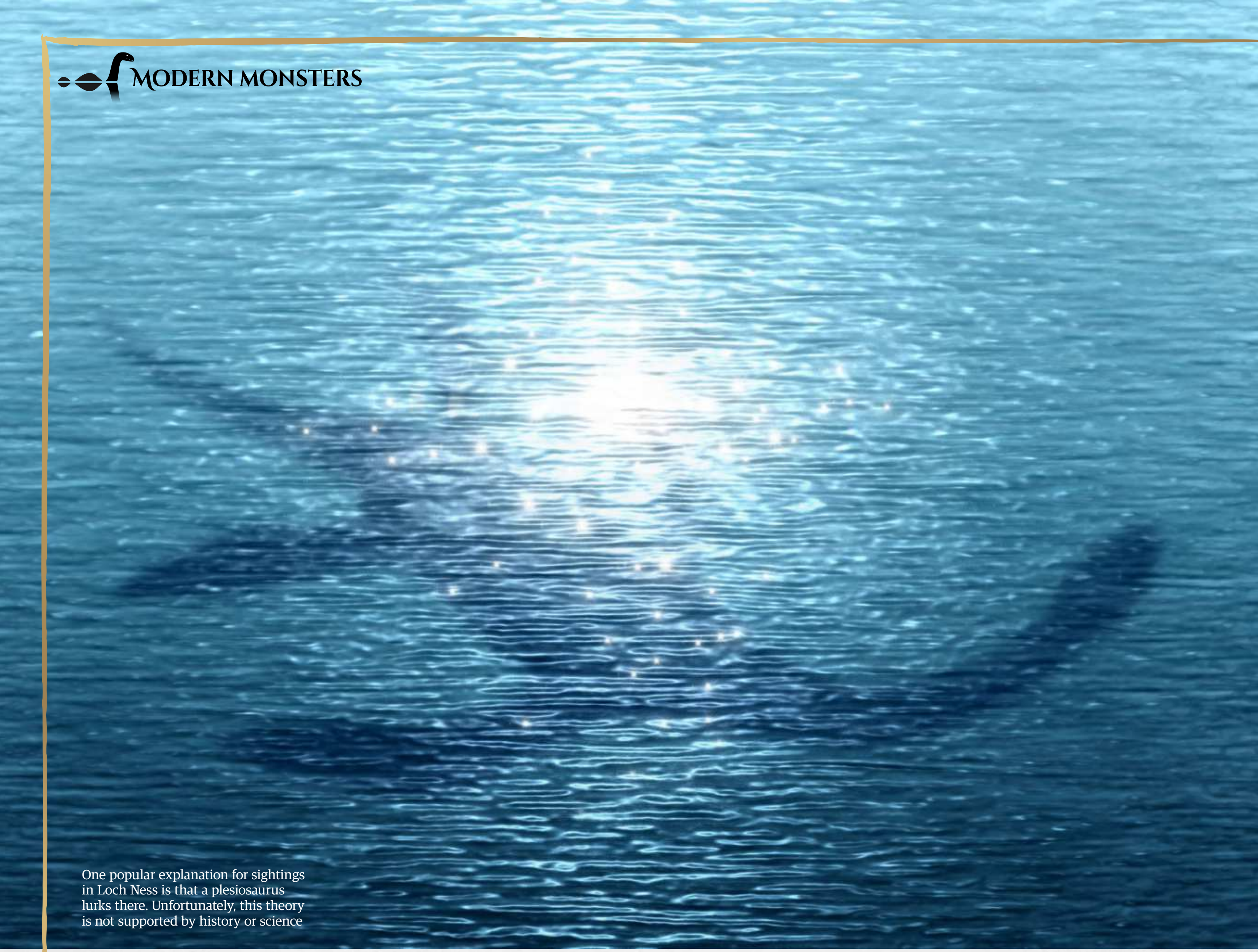
Image sources: Getty Images



Tales of mummies, curses, and ghosts soon made the leap to the big screen, which only furthered the legend of the Unlucky Mummy



The public fascination with all things Egyptian, and Gothic tales of horror, made the Unlucky Mummy a superstar

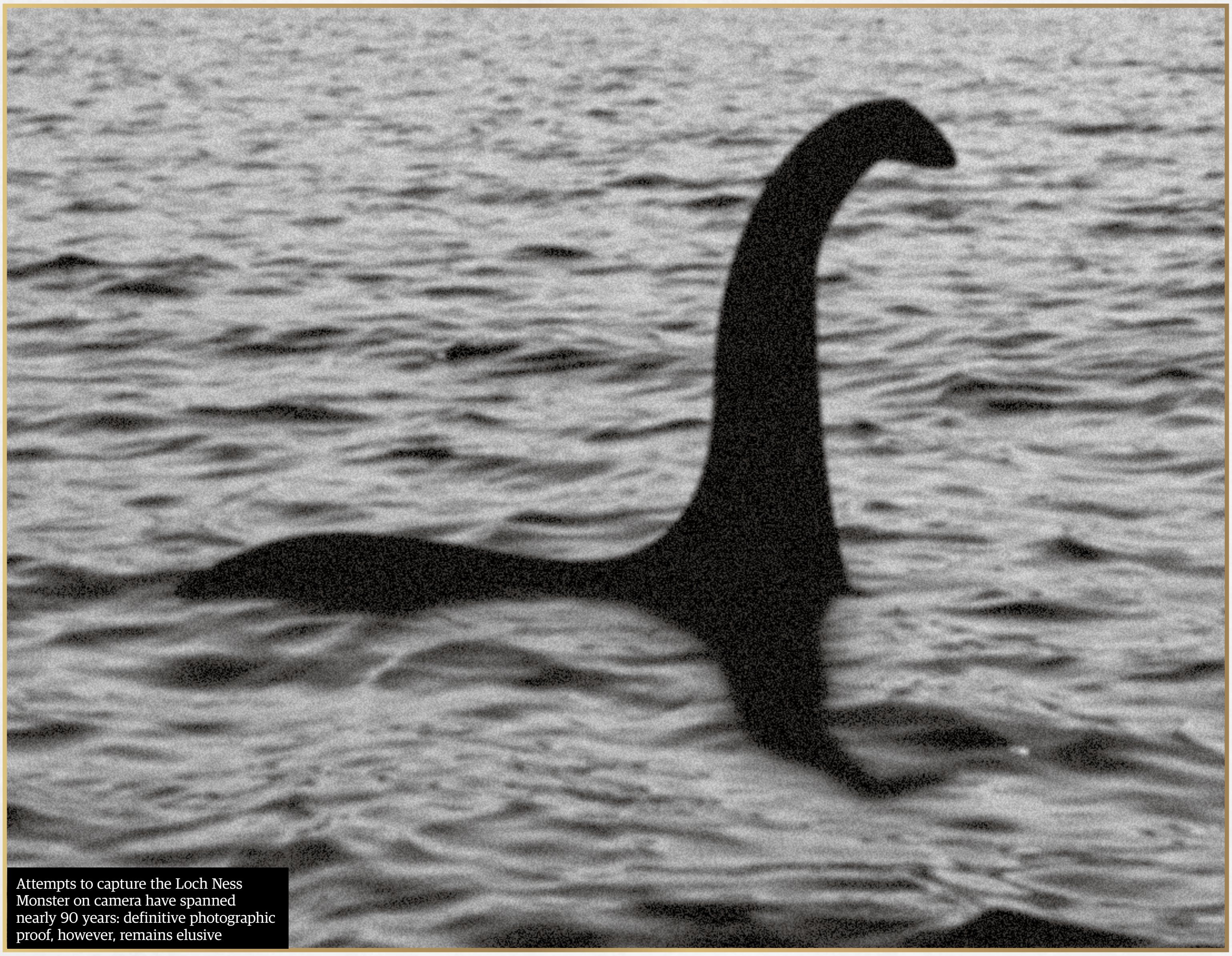


One popular explanation for sightings in Loch Ness is that a plesiosaurus lurks there. Unfortunately, this theory is not supported by history or science

THE LOCH NESS MONSTER

Lurking beneath the waters of Loch Ness is a mysterious creature. But what is the real identity of the Loch Ness Monster?

Written by Willow Winsham



Attempts to capture the Loch Ness Monster on camera have spanned nearly 90 years: definitive photographic proof, however, remains elusive

The idea of a monstrous creature lurking in the depths of Loch Ness is nothing new. The first mention of such a beast dates back to the 6th Century CE, when, in the *Life of St Columba*, the saint saves one of his companions from a water beast in the River Ness. A 12th century manuscript by Walter of Bingham also references a creature in the loch itself; showing something that resembles a bear.

It wasn't until the 1930s however that the Loch Ness Monster became the serpent-like creature we know today. In 1933 an account in the *Inverness Courier* recorded how on 22 July, George Spicer experienced the shock of his life. A creature, estimated at around 12 metres in length, with a long, wavy neck, crossed the road in front of his car before disappearing into the loch beyond. 'Nessie' fever was soon in full swing, with reports of a serpent-like creature or creatures living within the loch coming in across the next few years and sparking a decades-long fascination with everything Loch Ness.

There have been many attempts to prove the existence of the monster over the years. The Loch Ness Phenomena Investigation Bureau was in operation from 1962 to 1972, but failed to obtain the necessary proof to confirm Nessie's identity. Tours to try and spot the monster have been popular over the years, with tourists and serious investigators alike hoping to catch a glimpse of Nessie. Definitive photographic proof of Nessie has proven elusive. The first picture purporting to depict the creature was taken by Hugh Gray in the same year as Spicer's sighting. It was later proven to be an otter, rolling over in the water of the loch. The infamous 'Surgeon's Photograph' of 1934 was likewise finally disproven in 1994: it turned out to have been a hoax using a toy submarine. Later photos have also proved to have mundane explanations. Video footage has likewise led to nothing, as although on several occasions videos have been captured of long, unidentifiable shapes trailing boats from beneath, no evidence points to a monster.

> "There have been many attempts to prove the existence of the monster over the years"

An early popular theory to explain the sightings was the existence of a plesiosaur in the loch. Other explanations that have been put forward over the years are varied and include misidentification of animals or objects such as otters or driftwood, eels, seismic gas, or hoaxes. It is likely that there is no one explanation for Nessie, and while the creature continues to remain elusive, interest will never totally vanish.

© Getty images

> "The Puerto Rican chupacabra entered the world of urban legends in 1995"

Benjamin Radford debunked the chupacabra legend in his book, *Tracking the Chupacabra*, where he highlighted the link between descriptions of the chupacabra and the appearance of the alien Sil from the film *Species*

THE GOAT SUCKER EL CHUPACABRA

Lock up your animals! With a penchant for exsanguination, this terrifying Latin American cryptid takes no prisoners

Written by Willow Winsham

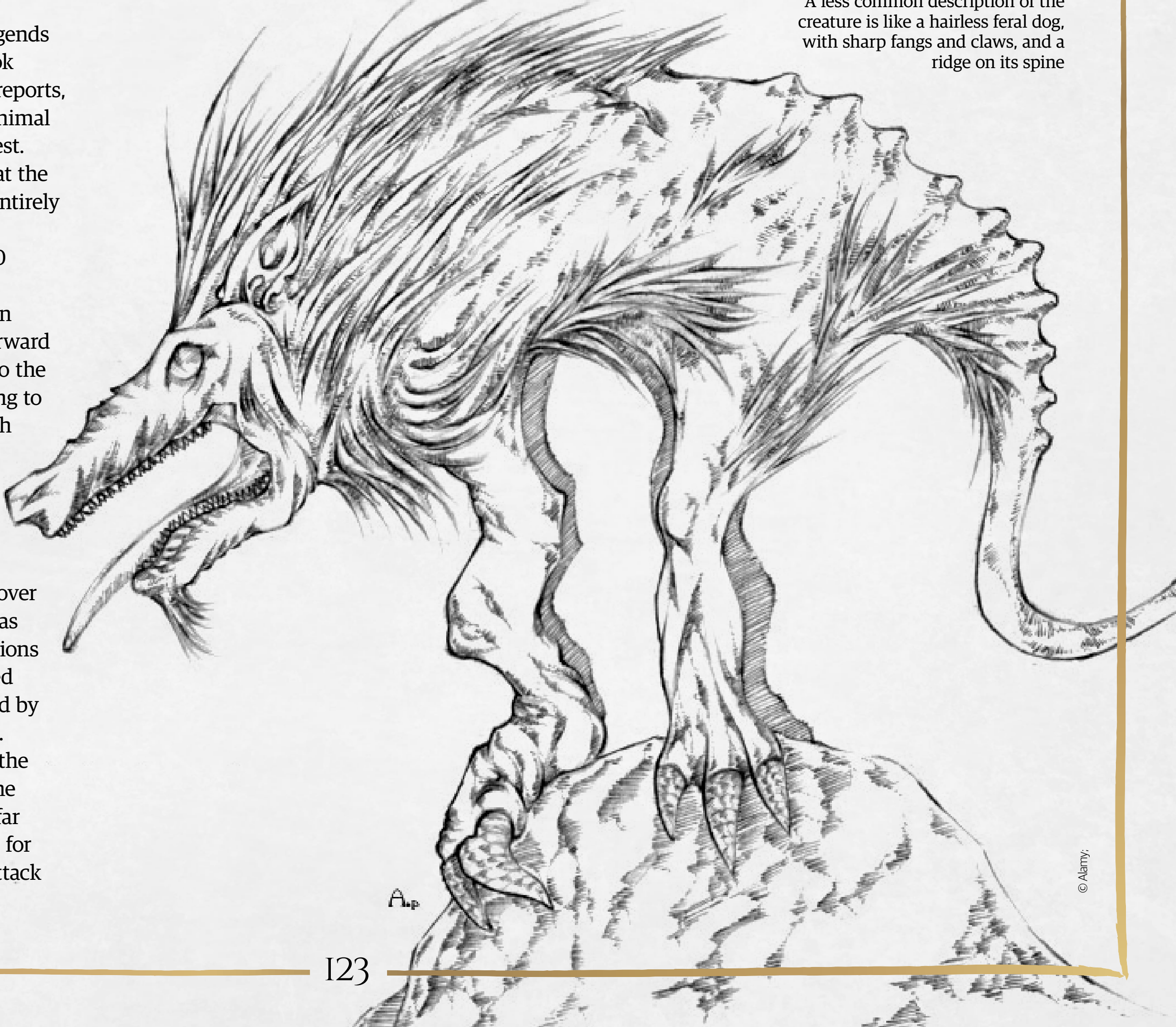
From the Spanish chupar 'to suck' and cabras, 'goats', this popular cryptid is the stuff nightmares are made of. So named due to the fact the creature is said to suck the blood from its victims - goats and other livestock - el chupacabra is not one you would want to meet on a dark night.

Equal to the Loch Ness Monster and Bigfoot in fame and popularity, the Puerto Rican chupacabra entered the world of urban legends in 1995, when the first reported attack took place in March of that year. According to reports, eight dead sheep were discovered, each animal sporting three puncture marks on the chest. The most disturbing fact however was that the animals were said to have been drained entirely of blood.

Matters escalated quickly, and up to 150 animals were said to have been killed by the creature in Canóvanas, Puerto Rico. An eyewitness, Madelyne Tolentino, came forward in August 1995, adding further credence to the existence of this deadly creature. According to Tolentino, the culprit was two-legged, with dark eyes that reached the temples and spread around the side of the head. It also had long thin arms and legs with three fingers and toes, and two holes in place of a nose, with long spikes down its back. The creature was seen many times over the next five years, operating as far away as Peru, Brazil, Chile and Columbia. Descriptions of the appearance of the chupacabra varied wildly across location and time: it was said by some to hop in the manner of a kangaroo.

Sightings continued to occur, and over the years chupacabra have been blamed for the deaths of animals across America and as far away as Australia and India. Explanations for the baffling state of the victims include attack by a type of vampire bat, mange-ridden dogs, a demon, a dinosaur or a mutant kangaroo.

Does the chupacabra exist? The evidence is shaky, due to the fact that the bloodless state of the original victims was never verified by the necessary necropsy that would have proved conclusively that the victims were in fact drained of blood. Also the evidence given by the first witness is on shaky grounds. A later researcher discovered that Tolentino's description mirrored that of Sil, the creature from *Species*, a horror film that premiered in the same year as the first supposed attack by el chupacabra. Interest in the creature, however, remains unabated.



A less common description of the creature is like a hairless feral dog, with sharp fangs and claws, and a ridge on its spine

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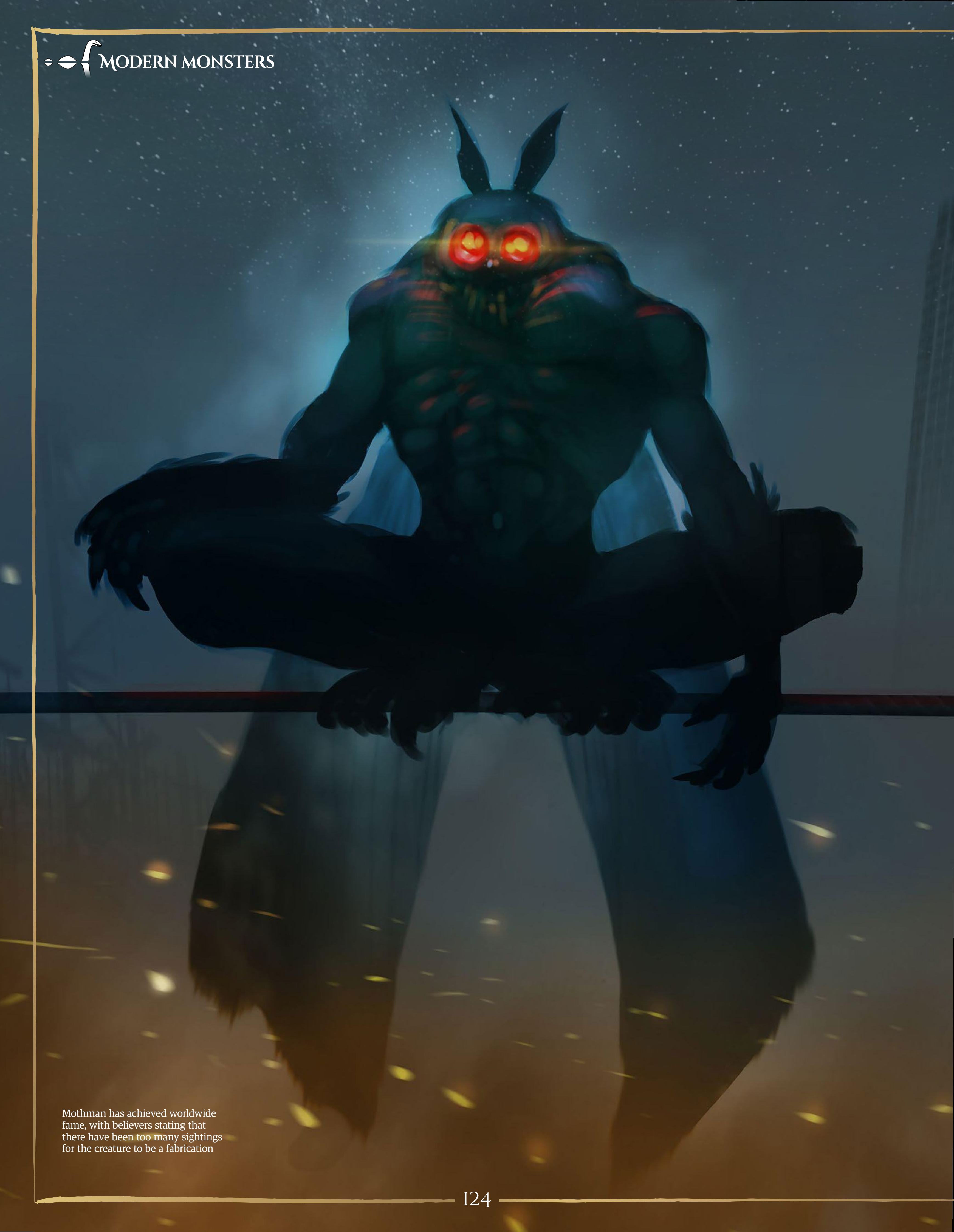

Mothman has achieved worldwide fame, with believers stating that there have been too many sightings for the creature to be a fabrication

THE LEGEND OF MOTHMAN

Not one for the faint-hearted, the legend of Mothman originated in West Virginia, United States, in the 1960s, and endures to this day

Written by Willow Winsham

Around midnight on November 15th 1966, two couples from Point Pleasant, West Virginia - Steve and Mary Mallette and Roger and Linda Scarberry - had a terrifying encounter. Driving together in the Scarberry's car, both couples described witnessing a creature that defied explanation: six or seven feet tall, with a wingspan of ten feet and glowing red eyes, it was, according to Mr Mallette, like a man with wings. According to the statements given, the creature displayed great speed, flying, they estimated, at around 100 miles per hour. It was not so good at running however, its movements described as clumsy. Mr Scarberry wasted no time in driving from the scene, only for the creature to follow, hovering after the car and scurrying through a nearby field as it continued to give chase. One weak point appeared to be that the creature was afraid of light: when the car lights shone on it, it tried to avoid them. The creature finally departed, rising straight upwards and disappearing with the sound of flapping wings.

The account of this encounter was published the following day in the Point Pleasant Register, sparking a spate of similar sightings of the creature that was soon to be named Mothman. There was little doubt in the minds of many that they were witnessing something supernatural, and talk of UFOs and monsters abounded. More rational explanations were soon forthcoming however: an associate professor of wildlife biology from West Virginia University, posited that the description matched that of the sandhill crane, the second largest crane in America.

In his 1975 book, *The Mothman Prophecies*, John Keel brought Mothman to a wider audience, and linked the collapse of the Silver Bridge that lead to the death of 46 people and serious injury of nine more, to the Mothman legend. This book was the basis for the 2002 film of the same name.

Mothman remains one of the most popular of US urban legends, still inspiring worldwide interest today. The original details have been greatly inflated, with wild claims about the creature including that Mothman is an alien, a harbinger of doom, or an as yet undiscovered type of animal. A less outlandish explanation, that the red eyes were actually the reflection of torch or headlights on the eyes of barn owls, has done little to dampen enthusiasm for the legend.

Point Pleasant has fully embraced the legend, with the Annual Mothman Festival held every third weekend of September since 2002.

> "Mothman remains one of the most popular of US urban legends, still inspiring worldwide interest today"

A sculpture commemorating the Mothman sightings of 1966/7 has been erected in Point Pleasant, where the legend continues to be prominent in local folklore

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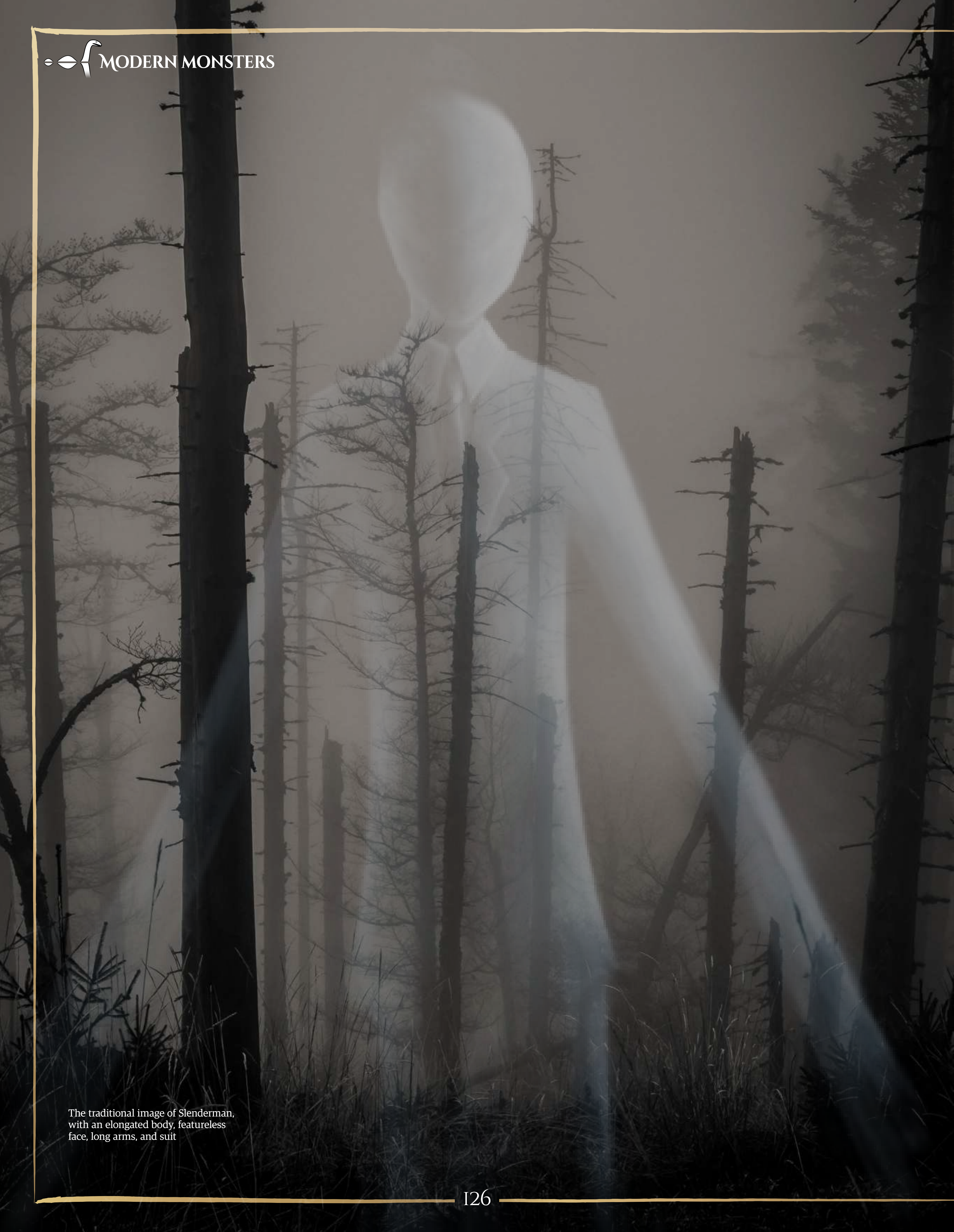
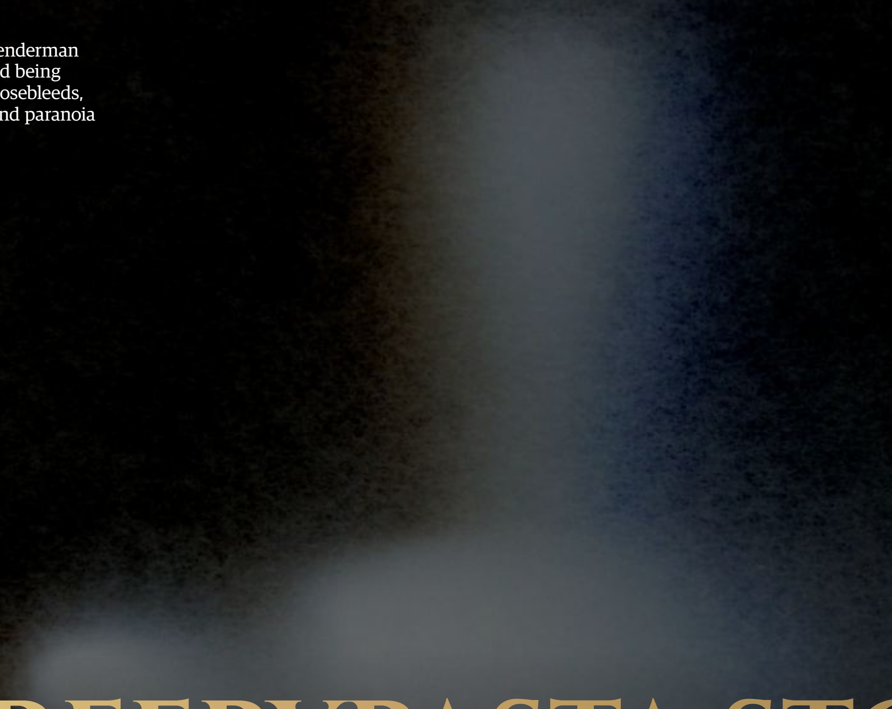


The traditional image of Slenderman, with an elongated body, featureless face, long arms, and suit



Some say researching Slenderman will draw him to you, and being close to him can cause nosebleeds, along with nightmares and paranoia

CREEPYPASTA STORIES: SLENDERMAN

Just how did this internet horror sensation lead to the grisly attack on a 12-year-old girl by her schoolmates?

Written by Dee Dee Chainey

Slenderman is a creature of nightmares; his featureless face haunts internet forums and social media sites alike. Anyone who has come across him knows what he looks like: an unnaturally tall and thin, faceless humanoid, clad in a nondescript suit, sometimes with tentacles - giving a sense of the preternatural that makes him an incredibly disturbing figure. His stories paint him as an evil creature, intent on stalking and abducting anyone he chooses as his prey.

While many view Slenderman as a creepy urban legend, this is far from the truth. In fact, this modern-day myth was purposefully created in 2009 by Victor Surge - real name Eric Knudsen - in the Something Awful Forum. Surge's creation was a response to a call for artists to make paranormal images. Surge went one step further and added snippets of text, creating the legend of a sinister child-snatcher. His creation soon spiralled into a prime example of creepypasta, a horror legend that becomes an internet meme as it is repeated over and over by different people in stories and art. Just five years later, on May 31st, 2014, the meme rose to new heights of infamy. In a tragic twist of events, the internet sensation inspired two girls to stab their classmate no less than 19 times after luring her to the woods in Waukesha, Wisconsin. The reason? They wanted to become puppets of Slenderman, earning his protection, which required a blood sacrifice. Luckily, the victim managed to crawl to the road for help, and recovered after almost a week in hospital. The two perpetrators were committed to mental health hospitals after being convicted of the crime. The attack caused a moral panic throughout the US surrounding children's activity on the internet. Further Slenderman related incidents did follow, and the figure's popularity soon waned with a harsh backlash from fans.

Whether folklore or fakelore, one thing is undoubtable: Slenderman culture now pervades lives across the globe, stepping from the digital realm into the real world. Slenderman now features in cosplay, films, video games, and is becoming a standard 'bogey man' for children playing tag. Personal stories of people who believe they have been victim to the fiend abound across the web. They report feeling 'watched' and 'followed' on dark nights in abandoned places - and particularly in the woodlands.

So next time you're walking through the deserted streets, do look behind you - and remember to run fast, just in case you catch a glimpse of the Slenderman reaching out to grab you with his strange, outstretched tentacle arms…

> "While many view Slenderman as a creepy urban legend, this is far from the truth"

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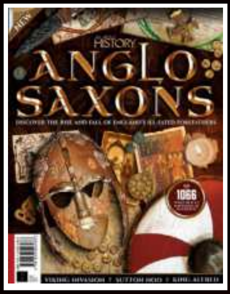
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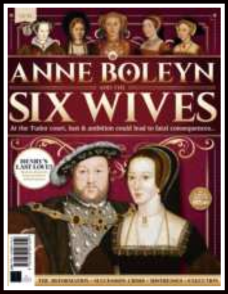
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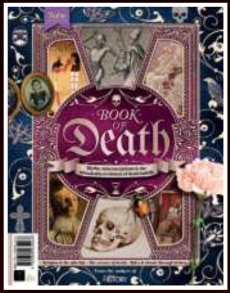
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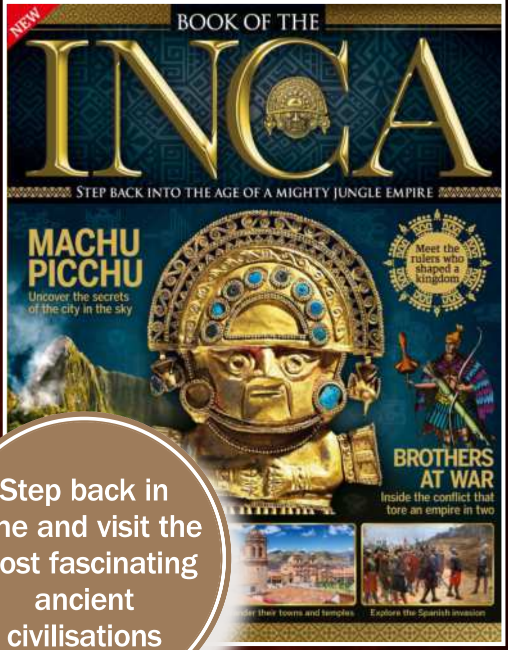
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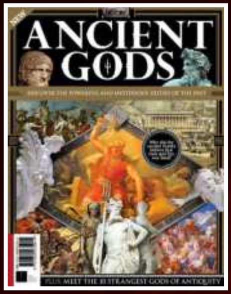
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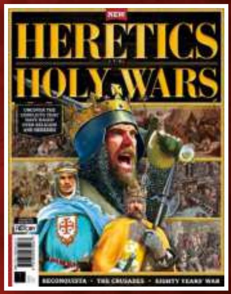
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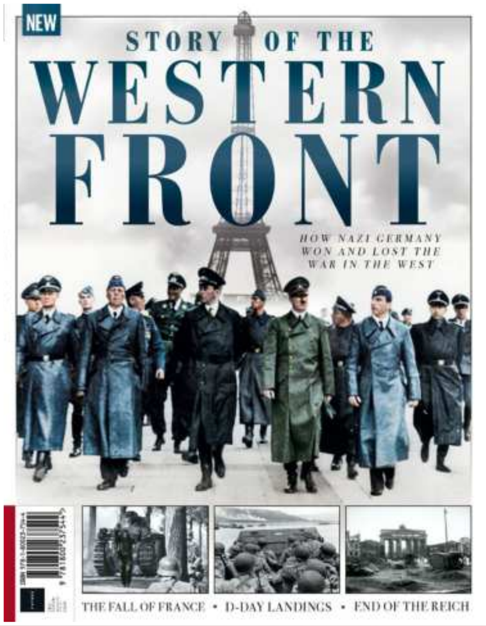
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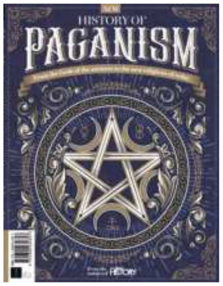
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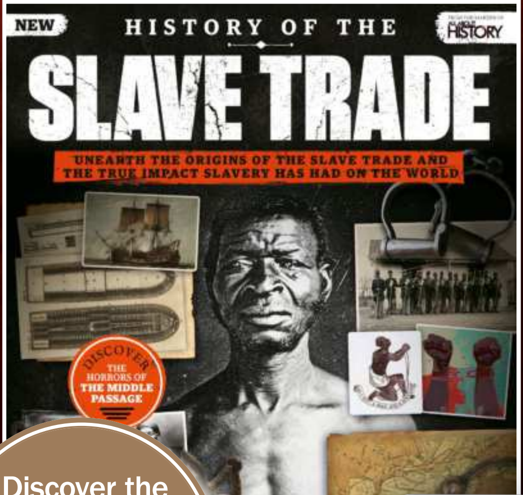
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